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ABSTRACT

This collection of 14 essays addresses the changes and challenges that the early childhood education profession in Australia has faced in recent years, and covers a wide range of important issues of particular relevance to the preparation of early childhood professionals. The essays are: (1) "The Changing Ecology of Australian Childhood" (Don Edgar); (2) "Chasing Ideologies in Early Childhood: The Past Is Still before Us" (Andrea Petrie)--an analysis of the dominant ideologies in the field of early childhood education; (3) "Practice and Professionalism: A Positive Ethos for Early Childhood" (Jocelynne Scutt); (4) "Accreditation: A Right for All Australia's Young Children or a Waste of Time and Money" (June Wangmann); (5) "Ideological Manoeuvering in Early Childhood Education" (David Battersby and Barbara Sparrow); (6) "Challenging Changes in Child Care Training" (Judith Bissland); (7) "Research in Early Childhood Education: Essential for the Profession" (Marjory Ebbeck); (8) "How Can Early Childhood Services Cater for the Needs of Aboriginal Communities?" (Isabelle Proctor); (9) "Men in Early Childhood Services: Why? Why Not?" (Margaret Clyde); (10) "Field Experience in Early Childhood Tertiary Courses: Making or Breaking a Professional Image?" (Beverley Lambert); (11) "Practical Curriculum Theory: Describing, Informing, and Improving Early Childhood Practices" (Gail Halliwell); (12) "From Piaget to Vygotsky: Moving into a New Era of Early Childhood Education" (Marilyn Fleer); (13) "Early Childhood Grows Up" (Anne Stonehouse)--a look at key challenges to the field of early childhood education as a manifestation of the progression of the field; and (14) "Dilemmas in Early Childhood Teacher Education: An American Perspective" (Lilian Katz). (MDM)

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CHANGING FACES

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSION IN AUSTRALIA

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Edited by
Beverley Lambert

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AUSTRALIAN EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATION

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FOREWORD

The history of early childhood service provision in Australia, until comparatively recently, was dominated by two formative themes: a romantic conceptualisation of childhood development and heavy emphasis upon voluntaryism. Each was a legacy imported from Europe and each exercised profound effects in shaping the dominant ideology of the early childhood field and its icons. For example, it was not until the 1970s that the domination of voluntary agencies in the area of organisational policy finally receded. Prior to that time the early childhood field, with a small number of notable exceptions, was synonymous with the kindergarten movement. The distinction between care providers and teachers was clear cut and highly charged. Students in the former Kindergarten Teachers Colleges were instructed in the detrimental effects of non maternal child care. John Bowlby's early writings on maternal deprivation assumed the status of truth inscribed in stone.

The shift from lay to professional involvement in policy formation brought with it both new opportunities and new challenges. The opportunities largely arose from the coalition between researchers and politicians, especially in the United States of America, which focussed on the remedial possibilities of early educational intervention as a means of ameliorating the damaging effects of social and economic disadvantage. Head Start became a tool in achievement of President Johnson's 'Great Society'. However, although programs were initially targeted towards the poor, the concept was also embraced by the middle classes. In Australia this was picked up as part of the Whitlam Government's reforms. Quite suddenly, early childhood became a populist cause and early childhood professionals experienced a renaissance.

The challenges were quick to follow. Early childhood programs became an area of contestation. The field of early childhood services was not seen as the sole preserve of the early childhood teachers. Professionals from other disciplines perceived contributions that they could offer to what had previously been a closed shop.

While one immediate response to this challenge was to close ranks, new forces began to emerge during the 1970s in Australia. In particular, the emergence of feminist critiques of a social order which severed mothers from participation in work demanded reform of the early childhood field. The contribution of the women's movement not only forced the early childhood field to enlarge its scope and mission but to legitimate child care as an equal service partner.

It is not intended or in fact is it necessary to explore the confluences and distinctions that have come to be represented in the early childhood field. Suffice it to say that debate and divergence have contributed to an enlargement of the scope of early childhood services. Nowhere is this more apparent than in efforts to unify the concepts of care and education into a single field of endeavour which looks beyond the confines of centre based services but reaches out into the very interstices of family and community life.

It is in the context of an enlarged and more enquiring profession that this volume of essays is to be welcomed. The volume draws contributions from a number of fields, which enrich debate, and enlarges the vision of the early childhood profession.

The papers address a wide range of important issues of particular relevance to the professional preparation of early childhood professionals. However, underlying many of the papers can be detected a sense of urgency for the development of more robust and clearly articulated professional commitments. It would seem that new forces and pressures are discerned within the Australian community that pose yet further challenges to early childhood professionals. This is what should be expected. The notion of rapid, and sometime acute, changes in the social and economic climate of the community are part and parcel of life in the 1990s and there are no signs that this state of affairs is likely to dramatically alter in the future.

While coping with change and perceived threat to values may suggest adoption of a pessimistic stance, this is not the message the papers convey. Rather, one can take heart from the vigour and diversity of the argument. It would appear that in Australia, early childhood professionals stand at a watershed. They can escape into the security of taking on board other peoples' solutions or they can experiment with indigenous concepts, while acknowledging our debts to offshore colleagues. However, in the final analysis it is we, as Australians, who have to force our own destinies. Therefore, *Changing Faces* represents a significant step forward down the road to a truly Australian conception of early childhood professionalism.

In this context two omissions from the topics dealt with can be noted. First, I think the volume would have benefited by inclusion of a chapter concerned with the role of early childhood professionals in relation to supporting family and community development. While this has often received attention under the heading of 'communication with parents', this aspect of early childhood has now moved well beyond simply that of communicating. Second, the issue of mainstream provisions for children with disabilities is a major fact of life for the majority of early childhood professionals. Unfortunately responses to date, providing SUPS workers in child care or specific aide time in other settings, are not in keeping with the spirit of 'integration' policies.

Despite these omissions the volume is to be welcomed as a clear expression of Australian interests and concerns with regard to the field of early childhood services. It is this achievement that represents a significant advance from the situation that existed prior to the early 1970s.

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PREFACE

Those working within the early childhood field in Australia are demonstrating a growing awareness of the need to become a strong profession, able to articulate the principles and practices which underpin the field and to work confidently, effectively and on equal footing alongside other groups and professions.

Australian society is undergoing a period of unprecedented change. One aspect of the change has been the catapaulting of child care into the political agenda as a mainstream issue. Another is the focus on microeconomic reform with an attendant overhaul of workplace practice, education and training. These and other changes mean that the early childhood field is no longer separate and autonomous from other disciplines and structures.

The new context is challenging and exciting as well as a little daunting. The opportunity to sharpen our goals and carry them into the wider arena of public debate should be seized with enthusiasm as an indication of our coming of age.

The pace of change within society also means that practices and beliefs within the field need to be subjected to constant, critical scrutiny and reflection to ensure that services remain relevant to the needs of contemporary families.

The Australian Early Childhood Association hopes that the publication of this book will contribute to the development of new professional perspectives by provoking debate on some of the significant issues we confront. Only when the questions have been fully debated, criticised, supported, modified, retested and restated can early childhood professionals take a strong role in making and shaping change rather than merely reacting to it.

This book cannot address all the critical issues that require attention. Two obvious gaps are the politics of service provision for children and families and early intervention issues. Hopefully, these and other important topics will be taken up in other AECA publications in the near future.

Beverley Lambert
Editor

CHAPTER 1

THE CHANGING ECOLOGY OF AUSTRALIAN CHILDHOOD

Don Edgar

Non-parental care has always been essential where parents both play a part in ensuring the family's economic survival. This fact is often ignored in debates over attachment, formal child care and the time and quality debates in early childhood development. This chapter analyses both the socio-economic and political contexts of child care and the changing internal dynamics of family life. It argues that the social ecology of childhood involves more than is often taken into account in early childhood theories, that much of the research has been misguided and misleading and that factors such as parental time, autonomy, sibling and peer influences and television stimuli should be a major focus. A 'soft' philanthropic view of child care may obscure the real dynamics of what is going on and the real needs of parents and children.

* This chapter was adapted from an address given at the 10th Annual Children's Services Conference, Jabiru, Northern Territory, May 1991.

This chapter is a discussion of two closely related aspects of the ecology of childhood: the external socio-political context and the internal context of the family itself.

Children are born into a social and physical environment that varies by culture, time and geography and some of these changes will be explored. But there are some universal elements with which I want to start because they help reassess the debate about child care and the modern family.

Every child is born into the context of a family, and that family offers her or him a microcosm of the socio-political world which has to be learned about and dealt with. There is always a mother and, usually, a father whose primal task has been to protect the mother and child, at least through pregnancy and the danger period of childbirth. Some theorists believe that pair-bonding (or what we call marriage) emerged because of the need for human parents to cooperate in the feeding, defence and rearing of their offspring (Lancaster and Lancaster, 1987, in Lamb and Sternberg, in press) and 'the family' emerged as a result.

Because human offspring are born not fully developed and not able to fend for themselves, survival depends upon high parental investment of time and effort over a long period of time. What we often forget when we talk about mother care, bonding, attachment and the needs of the child, is that the all-embracing need of both parents and child is for food and/or the economic means to provide food, clothing and shelter. We forget that from time immemorial, children have had to accompany their parents to 'work' in hunting, gathering, in tending the animals or tilling the fields, or else they have had to be left in the care of others, older children or other adults.

Lamb and Sternberg (in press) point this out with telling force in the introductory chapter to their forthcoming book on non-parental child care, and I draw on them heavily here to point out that the political and socio-cultural context of childhood has not changed one whit in this basic fact. As they put it, "Exclusive maternal care throughout the period of dependency was never an option in 'the environment of evolutionary adaptedness', and there are **no** societies today in which it is typical practice. Indeed, exclusive maternal care was seldom an option in any phase of human history; it emerged as a possibility for a small elite segment of society during one small portion of human history".

In other words, we should not forget that social change regarding the Australian family and the social ecology of child care which will be described later in this chapter sit within the whole human history of parents facing the economic necessity of leaving their children with other carers because their work time was needed elsewhere so their children could be properly supported.

We forget that the 'traditional' or 'natural' form of human child care in the breadwinner/housewife home has a short history, because of the power of recent mythology and the ideological trappings built up around the notion of childhood and motherhood.

Some examples may help illustrate this point. Sweden is often held up as the ideal, with universally available, high quality child care set within a cultural endorsement of sexual equality. In fact, Sweden's very generous family policies emerged in the post-War period because Sweden was not ravaged by the war itself. Rapid industrialisation produced a labour shortage and women were needed. The Swedes very sensibly set up high quality child care systems, but it was within an ethnically homogeneous and politically unified small nation rising to affluence. They had to have women employees who were still likely to bear and rear children because they were assured of high quality, readily accessible child care. So it was not all high ideals but economic necessity that drove the change.

The Eastern European communist countries faced the same need, though high quality was never assured. In the UK, the USA, Canada and Australia, governments set up nonmaternal child care facilities during the war solely to encourage women to work in war-time industries. Rosie the Riveter soon went her way when the men came back, encouraged to return to homemaking by the powerful myth of the 'traditional' family. Even in Israel, where the socialist Kibbutzim were surrounded by hopes of a new equality and a new lifestyle, it was the economic necessity to work the harsh land, rather than theory or altruism, which led to one woman taking care of several children rather than one mother to one child.

When we look at these economic necessities and the socio-political contexts of the way we regard and treat children, we need also to ask questions about who is kidding whom? Whose interests are being served in the debate about how best to care for our children?

Lamb and Sternberg (in press) suggest there are five basic purposes or reasons for non-parental care systems. We in Australia are confused by a mixture of these purposes and often conflicting interests vie for attention and political support.

Historically, the earliest group care facilities for children were set up by the wealthier ruling classes not because they wished to help the poor but because they feared the crime and threat of children on the streets. Even the Dutch infant schools had the purpose of civilising poor children to protect society from rebellion and crime. One might even say the more recent Headstart program in the US was designed to better socialise poor children and educate their mothers. This protection of class interests has been a common motive.

A second purpose is to foster equal employment opportunities for women. Eastern Europe and Sweden have already been mentioned, and Australia's current approach is partly aimed at this. The irony is, of course, that almost all of the paid child care providers are women and salary rates are therefore low.

A third purpose, also relevant to post-war Australia, is to establish child care services and preschools to facilitate the acculturation or assimilation of migrants. Italy's preschools doubled in the 1960s because the philosopher Ciari believed they could help create common cultural beliefs. The Kibbutz served a vital function in teaching the Hebrew language and the norms of Israeli Jewish culture to incoming foreign Jews. China uses child care programs to inculcate habits of hard work and individual sacrifice, with the expectation that children will then re-educate their parents.

A fourth goal has been to reduce welfare dependency on the State. Women cannot be retrained or employed without the provision of suitable child care. The US has pushed this line in the 1980s and Australia's JET scheme has similar goals, coupling jobs, education and training with special child care assistance.

Finally, and most importantly because it often runs across all of the above, child care has been developed to enrich the lives of children. The 'garden of children', the Montessori schools, Headstart - virtually every country has recognised that not all parents can offer a rich learning environment for their children, and better socialisation might result from group child care. The UK is at one extreme, using day care as a service for children at risk or for children whose parents cannot cope. The effect has been to make government spending in this area unpopular. Canada has recently recast day care as a service of value to **all** Canadian families and Australia's press towards 'the Clever Country' may finally help those in power to recognise the vital importance of investing in the early years.

Yet many parents still have to accept what is provided, regardless of quality. Where, for example, have the promised national Australian standards for subsidised child care gone? Why is it that some areas (remote rural, urban fringe) have so little access to quality child care? Why are so few employers failing to take advantage of the government's guidelines for subsidised work-based child care?

I would suggest it is because we are still ambivalent about the purposes of non-parental (group) care provided as a substitute for maternal care. We are in a hiatus, at a time of confusion where attitudes and ideologies have not caught up with the actual behaviour and everyday pressures faced by parents in today's context.

CHANGING SOCIAL ECOLOGY OF AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN

Following is a brief description of some current Australian statistics which set the contexts of children's lives in Australia today.

The 1986 Australian Census asked a number of questions about households and family relationships that give a much better picture of current family structures. When we look at types of households, for example, most are what we call family households (77.4%). Lone person households make up only 18.5% and a small minority are made up of other groups of people.

The majority of children (84%) aged 0-14 years live in married couple families with only 12% in one parent families and 4% with de facto couple parents. So the frequent media picture of a decline in family life in Australia is very misleading. However, when we ask how many Australian families are still of the so called 'traditional' form with wife at home, husband at work plus dependent children; the picture of change is somewhat different. The question is tricky to answer because one can compare the figure with different sorts of base lines. For example, traditional families as a percentage of all two parent families with dependent children make up 39% of all Australian families. But as a percent of all families with dependent children the figure drops to 33%, and as a percentage of all families of whatever type the proportion of 'traditional families' is only 18%. In other words, one of the major changes affecting the family life of children has been the re-entry of mothers into the paid labour force.

Marriage is still popular but people marry later and have children later than in previous decades. The median age for first marriages was 26.3 for males and 24.2 for females in 1989. The reasons for this shift are partly economic and partly changes in the attitudes of women brought about by the need for further education and legislation for equal opportunity.

The other major change that has affected the lives of children is, of course, the increased number of marriages which end in separation or divorce. On current estimates, approximately one out of three children will experience the divorce of their parents. In 1986, for children aged 15 between one quarter and one fifth were not living with their natural parents.

When it comes to child care, the picture is even more complicated. One needs to remember that formal child care is not the most frequently used arrangement. Only 8% of children under 3 years are placed in formal care and 34% of 3-5 year olds use formal care. The majority of children are in less formal arrangements being cared for by friends, relatives or neighbours (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1987).

With so many mothers in paid employment, one might well ask what effect this has had on their work at home in both housework and child care tasks? Results from a recent child care study by the Australian Institute of Family Studies indicate that although there is a reasonable proportion of this sort of work done by fathers, the impact of full time or part time work on the household and child care responsibilities they choose to take on is virtually negligible. We have a long way to go in educating Australian males that where both partners are working, work in the home requires some greater balance in parental responsibilities.

To sum up, one can say that women have changed considerably in terms of the dynamics of parental income earning and time available for interaction with children, but this has not necessarily flowed over into concomitant changes in the sex role division of labour. Certainly children are now growing up in smaller and much more varied households than in the post-war years, but the family is still of central significance to their wellbeing.

Bronfenbrenner (1990) claims that children need, not just adults, but parents who are motivated to provide them with 'enduring, irrational emotional involvement'. In short, children need strong families. They need social acceptance and strong love without the need for any justification. The family unit is virtually the only social group in which one does not have to justify one's right to be there. In Robert Frost's terms, "Home is where, when you've nowhere else to go, they have to let you in". Unfortunately, not every home is like that; not every parent knows how to provide that ongoing acceptance; not every family today can afford that enduring involvement. Family structures have changed. Values have shifted towards individual self-fulfilment and away from oneness with others in the pursuit of some common purpose.

It can no longer be assumed that all families are of the one type, are united in purpose or see children in the same way. Couples marry later, have their children later, have fewer children and combine their parental duties with dual workforce careers. Family processes are inevitably more varied, less secure, subject to the pressures of economic need, the often conflicting desires of self-fulfilment and the demands of marriage itself.

Perhaps the major impact of such changes in family life has been on the 'ecology of childhood'. David Popenoe (1988) says the evidence is not yet on hand whether those changes are good or bad for bringing children to adulthood, or even for the quality of the childhood experience in itself, but he is right in highlighting the following shifts:

- Families have become very **small**, so there may be fewer opportunities within the family for learning the values of cooperation and sharing; for having intimates on whom to rely for association and companionship; for providing role models for younger children and child care responsibilities for older ones.

- Families today may have fewer **joint activities**. There is instead more TV, riding in cars and other pastimes that involve less social interaction, fewer celebrations and joint memories which enrich 'family culture'.

- Meaningful contact time between parents and children is diminishing and children know fewer other adults.

- Families have less time now for the development and maintenance of family-centred routines and traditions which all add to a sense of social belonging and continuity in life.

- Children now live in an era of less regular contact with relatives, especially relatives of the same generation. Hence, 'primal ties' may be looser.

- The neighbourhood is often empty of adults and is no longer a lively place with familiar faces.

- The comforting assumption that parents will remain together has less validity today. A widespread childhood fear is now that of parental separation (Amato, 1987).

- The separation of work from home that drove men from their families, is now happening with women. Not only does this remove role models of adult employment, it also places children in varied childhood settings (such as day care centres), which differ in their quality and impact on children.

- A 'disinvestment' in family life means many children miss out on the presence of a rich family subculture - a set of norms, symbols, humour, even language that is special to that group, and thus on a body of meanings that give social and emotional anchorage. Children need a strong sense of emotional social continuity between past and present generations.

- What follows from having a rich family subculture is the learning of norms and values that are essential to a just and humane society - of voluntary caring for others, cooperation and sharing, the narrative basis for order and the 'rational' acceptance of laws which give rights and responsibilities to every member of the human family.

None of this poses a social catastrophe. Most of it may be very good for children. But it is a changed and changing ecology of childhood which must be taken account of in constructing services for children. If families have become isolated, family time more split up, parents lacking in confidence, we have somehow to reaffirm the value of emotionally meaningful committed relationships, and to 're-surround' families as vital elements of the wider human family.

We have sadly, little evidence of what is happening to children in Australian homes. Child development research has been so locked into the narrow psychological framework of attachment theory and the supposed adverse effects of poor mother-child bonding, that it has ignored the wider social context in which today's children are learning to cope. It is hoped that the AIFS project on 'Early Child Care' will give a much more detailed and 'ecologically valid' basis on which to assess some of the impacts on children of their varied social contexts.

CHILDHOOD AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON

Following are some of the very suggestive ideas emerging from the Vienna Centre's project on 'Childhood as a Social Phenomenon'; perhaps some of the issues raised there may spark more searching questions concerning the contexts of Australian childhood.

Norway, for example, reports that one in three children is born outside marriage and that the so-called 'feminisation of poverty' is really 'the pauperisation of motherhood' because it is the presence of children that leaves families in poverty despite the greater workforce participation of mothers.

Norway has a more child-orientated culture than our own, with school times restricted to allow children more leisure time with friends and peers, plus lots of organised voluntary group activities. In recent times organised activities have increased both as a tool of social control and as a means of substituting for the lack of parental input.

Indeed a new family culture has emerged where **time** is the central factor. Parents and children spend less time in the same neighbourhood or physically near each other, but operate under an ideology of 'high quality contact', where the time spent together is supposed to be intense and active.

Whereas traditionally, Norwegian children were allowed great freedom outside the home but treated 'like children' at home, the modern pattern gives them high independence at home while mothers are out at work, and greater supervision outside the home through school and leisure organisations.

The key point is that children, though highly 'organised', have become stronger actors in their own daily lives, with greater freedom to organise their lives after school often in the company of peers, without any adult supervision. Television, the telephone, the ability to eat and wear what they like, free children from the

time-consuming negotiations with parents that go on when they are at home. Children thus 'can develop their own rhythm of life' and follow it without interruption.

The Norwegians remind us that despite lower fertility rates, and decreased family size, most children in families still do have siblings who are playmates during childhood. They also suggest that divorce and the break up of family life may have strengthened the bonds between siblings. In other words, siblings may constitute a more stable unit in the family than the parents.

Older children play an increasing part in the child care system, as caretakers for the younger children. Siblings of school age spend more time together than with their parents, so become very 'significant others' to each other.

Studies on the household division of labour often also miss the part children play in housework, chores, errands, doing as much if not more than the men and in a less sex-role related way. Older children have adapted themselves to the occupational role of their mothers, managing well on their own, under less supervision. Thus the political power position of the child becomes stronger and they are not just 'little helpers'; they are assumed to play their own part. Children also do more than we have realised in networking, caring for elderly relatives and linking the community itself.

Thus the Norway report (Frones, Jensen and Solberg, 1990) concludes, perhaps overdramatically, that 'the position of the housewife has been replaced by that of the housechild', who takes possession of the house for a large part of the day.

The irony is that while children become more independent and active in the home, there is a counter trend towards the institutionalisation of childhood outside the home. Parents no longer create by their permanent presence in the home, a social framework in which children can move. Instead they 'manage' their work and family time to protect children via schools, child care centres and organised leisure activities such as sports and music, in which they as parents are supposed to be involved via committees and meetings. In a sense this has created a new kind of dependency on the family amongst children and children are the main inhabitants of the home. The home is now more privatised in some ways than ever before because local playgrounds are less safe and children from the same neighbourhood might follow very different paths and pursuits, depending on the economic and work status of their parents.

In this context, television becomes an even more important factor in children's lives. Active children do require parents to show them both the possibilities and the limits that exist. Since the home has been transformed into a sort of unsupervised playground, television can, does and should create a new cultural framework for children's lives. The quality of what is shown is vital, as are the sorts of

activities, stimulus materials, associated games and reading that may go with each TV program. In that sense, as I have argued before, we need to think of child care more broadly, as a framework for child development, as materials and resources that children and parents can use in a variety of settings, perhaps more importantly in the home, than in a centre setting.

CONCLUSION

What is needed is a new approach which sees children, especially the young, as a public resource and a public responsibility. Their incredible giftedness must be nurtured not just by Mums and Dads but by every resource at the community's disposal. Child museums, parks and playgrounds, the design of shopping centres and public transport should all encourage the child's curiosity, question-asking, problem-solving, challenging thought and manipulation. Groups not normally seen as relevant to early child development (such as youth or the early retired) should be shown how to assist, given opportunities to act as mentors, models, aides to parents and their young children. That most potent of modern forces, television, must be used to open up new avenues to competence, with extensive back-up materials that parents and others can use to engage the intelligence of children.

The new Australian Children's Television Foundation television series 'LIFT OFF' with its vast community network, the OUTREACH project, aims to do just that within the Australian context. Its goal is to coordinate all the resources (both material and people) in the cause of 'lifting off' our young children into new worlds of imagination and new pathways to competence. The model is one of contextualised learning, cooperative competence, productive networking where children are not left to the narrow confines of one family context but that context is surrounded by the wider ecology of a stimulating, learning-oriented society in which children really are seen as and treated as our future.

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CHAPTER 2

CHASING IDEOLOGIES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD: THE PAST IS STILL BEFORE US

Andrea Petrie

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a critical analysis of the dominant ideologies within the field of early childhood, revealing the existing contradictions, conflicting self-images of workers and not a little hypocrisy which currently underlie the policy and practice of these services. It is important from this context to indicate ways in which the early childhood field can best prepare itself with new vitality and strength for the demands and challenges of the 21st century.

It is my contention that the early childhood field in Australia constantly battles for credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of the wider society. This is partly the result of social perceptions concerning the role and status of women, of children and of caring; partly the result of fragmentation within the field, with artificial divisions between education and care services and between various care services; and partly the result of the domination of the field by traditional, conservative ideologies.

There exist both public and professional perceptions that early childhood services are services for children provided almost exclusively by women. Closer scrutiny of early childhood services reveals males in positions of power or authority, with women who achieve positions of power or authority often following conventional male patterns, values and attitudes. Nevertheless, early childhood services generally remain low on the totem pole of social services which are in turn low on the totem pole of social order. At the same time there exists a clear hierarchy of status within early childhood services. Services defined as being educational are viewed as being more legitimate, credible and acceptable than care services. Even among care services there is a hierarchy of status with family day care being viewed as lower in status than centre-based care. The false dichotomy which has developed between education and care (Petrie, 1988) and the divisions among care services produce fragmentation and disruption projecting an external image which is counterproductive. This image serves to reinforce and perpetuate the marginalised status of early childhood services generally.

The overall effect is such that even though the early childhood field attempts to exhibit unity of purpose in promoting or implementing meaningful change, the unity is largely illusory, as indeed is the amount of actual change. It would be unfair to claim that no change is occuring, but there remain identifiable areas of resistance to change. More significantly, it is possible to determine that change has been more rapid and achieved more successfully in those states or territories in which early childhood services have received active support from women's groups seeking to place services for women and children firmly on the political agenda. It is also possible to identify greater rates of change within care services than within educationally-oriented services. In order to better understand the reasons for lack of change or disparities in rates of change, it is necessary to examine social forces without, as well as forces within the field of early childhood.

The rapid rate of economic, political and technological change evident in recent Australian history ostensibly has the potential to promote meaningful social change. It would not be unreasonable, for example, to expect ongoing forces to alter perceptions of role along gender lines, which in turn would influence family or family life (MacIntyre, 1985). Yet, this does not seem to be occuring at anything other than a superficial level. The reasons lie in the inherent nature of traditional ideologies to resist change. The rhetoric of policy does not necessarily change the reality of practice. For the rhetoric of policy, which outwardly signals the need for change, also serves as a signal for those who are resistant to change. The open

espousal of traditional values becomes acceptable no longer. Traditionalists then seek ways of erecting facades which make it appear as if some movement towards change is occuring. Their actions obscure from view the lack of any substantive change at all thus consolidating their attempts to maintain the status quo. Resistance goes underground.

A key factor in the success of any resistance lies in learning the rhetoric of change. This enables traditionalists to appear to be complying with policy directives whilst subverting the very process. Decision-makers and practitioners who lack critical, analytical skills subsequently fail to see or deliberately ignore situations in which substantive change has not occurred. Those who do possess the appropriate critical skills are viewed as "prophets of doom and gloom" and are excluded or ostracised to prevent further challenges, which in turn, reduces the possibilities for change to occur. In this scenario it is not unusual to find policy-makers and traditionalists united in their stance against such challenges, largely because the policy-makers in their naivety have been lulled into a false sense of optimism. Excuses for the lack of change ("Rome wasn't built in a day") become accepted as the reasons for the lack of change. This deflects attention away from the resistant traditionalists who smother their subversive activities in a welter of outward optimism that change can and will occur in time, given time - itself another victory for resistance; another for the traditionalists.

The early childhood field remains largely dominated by maternal feminists who exhibit a set of values, attitudes, ideas and beliefs that are essentially, patriarchal, sexist, racist and materialist in their orientation .

For example "being with young children" continues to be perceived as a woman's prerogative. In the private domain it is the women who do the "mothering". In the public domain it is the women who do the teaching and the caring. However, in direct contradiction, positions of authority within early childhood become the prerogative of the few men who train in the early childhood field. Indeed, standard criteria for positions of authority or leadership in early childhood (such as appropriate early childhood qualifications and/or expertise at the grass-roots level) appear to be relaxed or disregarded for males to enable them to attain these positions. A similar situation exists for some women seeking work at the grass-roots level where prior qualifications or expertise are waived entirely. In both cases, financial expediency is often the governing factor but both sets of actions devalue the field and are indicative of prevailing attitudes. On the one hand present decision makers appear to believe that high rates of pay and good working conditions should be reserved for males. On the other hand, it would seem that

Rich (1977:57-58) provides a useful definition of patriarchy:

> Patriarchy is the power of the fathers, a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the the male...

women do not need or deserve either, for it is deemed that women have always looked after children, a result of being biologically pre-determined to care (Brennan and O'Donnell, 1986). The logical end point of this particular argument would appear to be a strongly held belief in the pre-determined roles of men and women, not least being the economic argument that it is the male who is the 'breadwinner'.

Maternal feminists are intent on protecting and preserving a traditional view of the role and social status of women ('caretakers': Petrie, 1988)[1]. In particular, they seek to perpetuate the nurturing role, more specifically, the middle class conception of the nurturing role of women (Weiss, 1989). This ignores the reality of such a role within a capitalist, patriarchal society. The concept of caring which could otherwise be a positive aspect of social interaction in women's lives is almost totally devalued. It becomes a social tool manipulated at the whim of the prevailing economic climate. In this analysis, a further trap is revealed. Davies (1988) suggests that the process of maintaining the status quo becomes possible because so much remains unexamined or taken for granted. She makes the point that those who attain power do so only "because of the structures that empower them" (Davies, 1988:29). The structures within the field of early childhood are male oriented largely because many aspects of early childhood services are mere adjuncts of broader-based departments. Early childhood services are usually subsumed in larger educational or community service oriented agencies. Women who attain positions of power in the early childhood field have an opportunity to challenge dominant ideologies. This does not always occur: indeed the opposite may. Generally, these women have non-critical, non-analytical approaches to their work. Consequently they wittingly or unwittingly reinforce or serve to perpetuate the status quo.

This raises a further important point. The early childhood field has been criticised for its reluctance to contextualise clearly issues of concern. Recent writings by Brennan and O'Donnell (1986), Davies (1988) Clyde (1983, 1988) and Petrie (1989) have emphasised the need to broaden the early childhood agenda to include wider dimensions, based upon critical, analytical research. The present situation is summed up by Cameron (1989:7) who states that:

> There is little apparent dependence upon inspired and rigourously evaluated applied research...(This) has left the early childhood community with that warm fuzzy exterior and soft centre which critics are prone to claim that it has.

Yet a growing body of research and literature is available which could inform future directions for policy and practice. I would like to suggest that recent fem-

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[1] Maternal feminists would be outraged to be so labelled, for many maternal feminists neither see themselves nor describe themselves as feminists owing to the more modern perjorative connotations of the term.

mist literature not only provides a ready-made framework for critical analysis of women's place in society but also would serve as a catalyst for the development of new ideas and directions'.

Although recent feminism is considered anathema by many in the early childhood field, a feminist analysis (Dinnerstein, 1987; Chodorow, 1978; Mitchell, 1974) provides an understanding of the biological potentialities, social forces and material conditions that interact to construct the notion of 'woman' in any particular society. When exploring or examining early childhood services it is impossible to lose sight of the ties that have inevitably occurred between women and children. Yet, Firestone (1979:73) suggests that this special relationship is no more than shared oppression:

> The heart of women's oppression is her child bearing and child rearing role. And in turn children are defined in relation to this role and are psychologically formed by it; what they become as adults and the sorts of relationships they are able to form determine the society they will ultimately build.

This special relationship is clearly complex in its form but from this feminist perspective, can be viewed as systematic oppression. Schwartzer (1983), interpreting the work of De Beauvoir, clarifies the situation for those who work with children. She states that women do not have to 'bear' children in order to suffer the consequences of having them. In this context, Ruddick (1990) points out that the development of maternal thinking in which mothers become mentalists rather than behaviourists is a direct consequence of living their lives with young children. 'Motherly'/'womanly' qualities are viewed by wider society to include such attributes as humility, self-abnegation, and determined cheerfulness which, as Ruddick points out, are appropriate qualities in subordinates but not in leaders. The same might be said to apply to those personnel whose work is dominated by contact with young children. The very qualities that develop as a consequence of working with young children are the very qualities that militate against the active pursuit of status, and the search for positions of power and influence. By contextualising the historical construction of 'woman' or 'womanly' the resulting analysis identifies destructive and inhibiting factors thus offering an opportunity to choose alternative ways of being. In exploring the sociocultural and historical roots of the early childhood field and of society in general, Pence (1989:140) states:

> the boundaries of our mother-care paradigm become evident, clearing the way for the conceptualisation of new social structures and familial roles and relationships in a society not circumscribed by Victorian values and visions.

Delmar (1989:8) acknowledges that to understand the meaning of feminist is a complex undertaking, however she suggests a base line definition of feminism:

> Many would agree that at the very least a feminist is someone who knows that women suffer discrimination because of their sex, that they have specific needs which would require a radical change (some would say a revolution even) in social, economic and political order.

Significant in this context is the belief in the importance of 'motherhood' that is found in modern western culture. Critical to any understanding of the early childhood field is an analysis of how the notion of 'motherhood' has been constructed and perpetuated. The literature in the field (De Mause, 1974; Aries 1962, for instance) has documented the history of childhood and the evolutionary states of family and family life. Clearly 'childhood' has not always been an identifiable phenomenon and 'motherhood' is a creation of the Victorian era in which there was little doubt that family life was best and that raising children was a duty to God. 'Childhood' gradually developed as an adjunct to the modern bourgeois family accompanied by a gradual increase in the glorification of the mother/child relationship and romanticised depictions of family life. The gradual advent of the child-centred family created distinct identities for children and for women.

Firestone (1979) discusses the way in which power hierarchies in the biological family and sexual repressions that are necessary to maintain it as an entity are destructive and costly to the individual psyche. The 'cult of childhood' created by the patriarchal nuclear family and the onus for caring for children reinforce the notion that it is the woman's reproductive biology that is the source of her original and continued oppression.

Scarr and Dunn (1987), by questioning the centrality of mother-care to a concept of motherhood, explode the myth that the mother-care relationship is uniquely important. This view is supported by Dally (1983), who indicates that society, by insisting upon the notion that the only psychological essential is to keep mother and child together, creates a situation where it is possible to ignore the individual needs of both. Dally (1983:10) states:

> ...this segregation of mothers and children is a new phenomenon ... there is no scientific evidence to justify it on psychological grounds ... if one wanted to look for evidence one might even come up with the suspicion that the era of unbroken and exclusive maternal care has provided the most neurotic, disjointed, alienated and addicted generation ever known.

When these thoughts are aligned with research work, for example by Weisner and Gallimore (1977) which indicates that in only 20% of societies studied in a group of 186 societies around the world was the mother the principle care-provider in the child's early years, the inescapable conclusion is that traditional notions of family, family life, mothering and new motherhood are fundamentally flawed. In a further irony it is possible to argue that the Victorian (traditional) model of mothering and motherhood was in itself a myth. Steedman (1985:13) suggests:

> ...the lineaments of modern 'good' mothering were developed by women who were not the natural mothers of children in their care...(the) prescribed psychological dimensions of modern 'good' mothering ('attention, empathy, watchfulness and enforced companionship') have been forged by waged women, working women - by nurses, nannies and...teachers.

In the Australian context Wearing (1984) suggests that dominant ideologies related to family and family life have served to obscure the subordinate role of women and mothers. One result of this has been the development of a climate of oppression. Perhaps more important is the development of a situation in which the majority of mothers carry out their domestic labours with active support of networks of other mothers, kin, neighbours, friends and members of voluntary organisations. The tragedy is that these networks become crucial in reinforcing the traditional role of women in parenting in which emphasis is given to aspects of 'good' childrearing practices and notions of 'ideal' family life.

The early childhood field in Australia has historically concerned itself with traditional ideologies. This can be illustrated by examination of a major focus of early childhood programs aimed at 'educating' parents to provide what is 'best' for children. Thus, a plethora of parent programs, publications, seminars and conferences have consistently addressed these traditional concerns. In doing so, they serve to reinforce traditional ideologies and at the same time serve to undermine the integrity of women. The danger lies in repeating the sort of situation reached in the United States described by Goodman (1980:6):

> Our inadequacy is brought home to us by those wonderful people, the early childhood people. Now we are told that if we don't hang the right mobile over the cot at eighteen months, our children will never get into Harvard at eighteen years. One of my favourite advertisements, which ran in our paper (Boston Globe), carried the following challenge from Burton White: Will your children remember you for what you did for them or for what you did to them? I'm grateful my daughter was four before I found out it was all over at three. This has helped our relationship enormously.

A similar situation is discernible in the advent of child care services in Australia. MacIntyre (1985:125) re-counts events in 1974-75:

> The Australian Preschool Association, itself in receipt of Government funds actively agitates against child-care to the extent of sending home leaflets pinned to children's jumpers exhorting mothers not to go out to work.

The 'working mother' syndrome has cast a long shadow of indecisiveness and resistance over policy and practice in early childhood. It is from the early 1970s that we can discern the widening of the schism between 'education' and 'care'. 'Other-care' is needed for those who do not wish to or for those who cannot provide 'mother-care' (Scarr and Dunn, 1987) but 'other-care' represents the failure of 'mother-care' in the eyes of traditionalists. 'Other-care' becomes a direct challenge to 'mother-care' and therefore presents a direct challenge to traditional ideologies.

A considerable number of significant early childhood figures who determined action in 1974-75 are still active in the early childhood field. Still 'care-taking' in terms of 'mother-care' their views have not changed substantially but they have

become more subtle in the ways in which they promulgate them. For example, texts used in early childhood courses indicate that traditional messages persist, for example, White (1975), reiterated ten years on in Ferguson and Solomon (1984). Similarly the dominance of psychologically-oriented rather than sociologically-oriented input into courses serves not only to reinforce traditional ideologies but also to obscure the importance of new or different perspectives. The work of Kelly (1986) with graduating early childhood student teachers indicates that the majority are continuing to espouse traditional ideologies about family and motherhood. Eighty percent of the sample (all women) who were not yet mothers but who were about to enter the workforce saw themselves as primarily responsible for their own children in their early years. In addition almost 50% of the sample did not see themselves re-entering the workforce until their children were at school. Kelly (1989:117) states that these teachers are so "deeply imbued with the prevailing ideology that they themselves do not value care as highly as education". These early childhood teachers will be active well into the next century and may become 'significant figures' in the early childhood field.

Both Ferguson and Solomon (1984) and Watts and Patterson (1984) retreated into statements concerning the methodological difficulties of evaluating the effects of child care. This procrastination did little at the time to advance the cause of child care. More important these attitudes reflect an important dimension of the dominance of the early childhood field by educationists. A "blaming the victim" ideology (Ryan, 1972) is used by those in positions of power or influence to consistently down-grade and devalue or even disregard issues central to the development of child care. A valid, indeed socially respectable and responsible concern for issues of child development has become a major argument for rejecting alternative forms of childrearing or alternative forms of child care. This occurs because issues of child care are seen as challenging or threatening traditional ideologies. Cameron (1989) notes that the early childhood field appears to be more concerned with the maintenance of past orthodoxies, with outmoded boundaries, with rigidity and with concern for the status quo rather than flexibility or sensitivity of response in a rapid changing world. Cameron states (1989:6):

> ...I have always been somewhat perplexed by the pre-occupation of early childhood professionals with the terms 'care' and 'education' and with their ingenuity in investing these terms with whole families of meanings, to the extent that they can be used with telling effect for disparagement and abuse and for avoiding the need to listen to contrary points of view.

The pre-occupation by the early childhood field with the micro-aspects of service delivery (the quality care debate), the ill-defined used of terms (eg. long term care being viewed as synonymous with day care) and the simplistic hypotheses underlying research (eg. is day care good or bad?) have contributed to the notion that child care is not so much a social process with a historical perspective but more a scientific or pseudo-scientific subject based on an idea of discovering what is 'best for children'.

There remains a reluctance by many in the early childhood field to accept the legitimacy and credibility of child care services. This ignores the realities of the changing social context. Those who promote or advocate child care issues are seen as deviating from traditional ideologies ('agitators': Petrie, 1988). Moreover promoting child care is akin to promoting deviation from 'normal' family patterns which in the eyes of the 'caretakers' can only ever be 'second best' or 'the best that can be done under the circumstances'. Alternative patterns of child care are viewed at best as a 'necessary evil' resulting from some form of personal failure on the part of family members, or at worst as contributing to the demise of social order. 'Agitators' become victims of the pernicious paternalism with which much of early childhood services is invested (for pernicious paternalism read maternal feminism).

The concept of 'motherhood' and particularly the concept of 'mother-care' are constructs which have emerged as a part of the economic needs of society and at the same time have gathered strength as powerful beliefs at the individual and societal levels. Both have been idealised by deliberate economic, political and social thrusts which have largely been concealed under the guise of personal ideals. But idealisation has become a smoke screen which effectively covers oppression and exploitation. It conceals indifference under a veil of sentimentality. Idealisation enables oppressors to perpetuate oppression whilst at the same time allowing the oppressor and the oppressed the opportunity to avoid confronting and to avoid recognising that very oppression. It has the effect also of blocking insight and understanding and it becomes difficult to challenge the status quo in a context in which insecurities loom large.

Integral to notions of any ideals such as 'good' woman and 'good' mother are questions of judgement. In Australia, idealistic notions of 'good' woman and 'good' mother are to be found in each recognised social grouping. Within each classification of ideal is a pinnacle which acts as a reference point for 'less good' and 'not so good' identities which eventually become the anti-ideal of the 'bad' woman or 'bad' mother. This labelling process is clearly associated with values from the colonial past. As Matthews (1984:16) states:

> Near the top, in Australia, is the woman who is Australian born of British stock, heterosexual and monogamous, happily married with several lovely children, comfortably off, living in her own home, perhaps working in a service occupation (but not while the children are young), careful of her appearance, clean and tidy, abstemious but hospitable, moderately religious (Protestant).

By extension these ideals become essential qualities for personnel working in the field of early childhood, especially in the educational sphere. Preschool teaching for example came to be viewed as a genteel occupation for girls from the upper-middle class whose families were in a position to support them. More important it was a so-called respectable fill-in activity for a girl in the transition between

leaving school and settling into married life (Spearritt, 1979). One immediate implication of these perceptions has been a general devaluation of the role of professional early childhood workers resulting in marginalised status not only in the eyes of other professionals outside of the educational sphere, but of marginalised status in the eyes of other professionals within the educational sphere. A further implication of this situation has been the development of a set of suitable traits deemed as being desirable for early childhood workers. These traits, including politeness, courtesy, kindness, warmth, consideration and loving concern, are clearly middle class in their orientation. Of greater relevance perhaps is the suggestion by Cameron (1989) that these traits are prized at the expense of attributes such as precision, vigour, accuracy, strictness, and exactness, on which informed and effective practice depends – the very hallmarks of professionalism.

An example which illustrates this situation is that of the work of Byrne (1986) who was the last principal of the Brisbane Kindergarten Teachers' College. Her book *Meeting the Needs of Our Children, A History of the Brisbane Kindergarten Teachers' College 1911–1981* was reviewed by Gardiner (1986:74):

> One feels that one is being given a smooth picture of a happy band of colleagues working always in an atmosphere of sweetness and light. ...The early chapters are an uncritical account of the College's foundation and development. It is a limited almost parochial account.

Byrne's work can be considered as not unusual in the early childhood field which has a tendency to treat its focus of inquiry as separate from the general social and political spheres and which 'cries out to be placed in a wider context'. Byrne's approach can be contrasted to the approach of Brennan (1991) which documents historically the tensions between education and care. Her analysis identifies the key ideological debates and acknowledges the interconnectedness of the political, economic and social conditions with the construction and implementation of policies and practices. It is important to note that Byrne can be considered an educationist whereas Brennan is considered a proponent of child care. Byrne is clearly identifiable with the field of early childhood. Brennan is an external observer.

There have been explanations advanced for reasons why there is a tendency of educational history to present material as disconnected from wider historical issues. According to Steedman (1985:11):

> It has been suggested that this closing of frontiers between education and other disciplines has served to increase mystique and status for practitioners whose intellectual education is different from, and within our class system, bound to be seen as inferior to that of the traditional academic disciplines.

Frontiers have been closed between early childhood education and child care. There is confusion in the early childhood field for those imbued with traditional ideologies, particularly when confronted by critical analyses of the very beliefs

and attitudes they consider sacrosanct. Further, child care personnel are viewed as competitors for the positions of 'experts' in a field which has been historically monopolised by educationists. It has been of little wonder that 'frontiers' have been 'closed' and defences raised especially against a group of 'intruders' who by their very existence appear to be undermining and challenging accepted ideologies and practices.

Similarly there is confusion for women. Conditions in western society today make it extremely difficult to be a 'good' woman and a 'good' mother. The way our society is organised is creating enormous problems for women and children. Women today are caught in the 'crossfire' between old and radically new social ideas. The mixed messages that women receive about their 'rights' and about their 'proper' place are closely linked to the politics of what women 'ought to be' and the psychology of what children are 'supposed to need'. Working mothers often face a hostile barrage of disapproval and criticism from relatives, neighbours and professionals telling them that they should stay at home with their babies. Some experts who control information about what is 'good' for children have been no more sympathetic. In 1980, Etaugh documented a predominantly disapproving attitude to working mothers in the media. Disapproval centred on the consequent neglect of children, husbands and homemaking. Employed mothers are still targets for traditional blame. Everyday problems of children growing up become ammunition against the working mother for not having provided a 'proper home'. An example of this can be seen as recently as February 1991. A journalist reporting on the proceedings of a Sydney Conference writes:

MUMS 'GUILTY' OF LOVE

> Guilt-ridden working mothers were transforming their children into tyrants by spoiling them, psychologists said yesterday.
>
> (Courier Mail 13 February 1991:5)

It would seem that the 'working mother' can never be 'right'. In addition, many working mothers fear putting their children in day care situations. Rutter (1982a) examines the bases of that fear. He identifies three themes related to the deleterious effects of day care. The first is that day care deprives children of the loving care required for normal development. Second, that being in day care creates insecurity and aggression. Third, that day care destroys the parent/child, child/parent relationship.

Experts are far from unanimous in their beliefs. However, all give advice. Confusion is created because 'motherhood' as an institution today is a mixture of old and new trends and a combination of tradition, reaction and misunderstanding. The advice meted out is entirely dependent upon the beliefs of the larger culture - as the pendulum of social change swings so does the advice. Inevitably there is a 'time lag'. New 'ways of doing and being' are created in a climate of

existing beliefs. The persistence of traditional views of 'motherhood' is a consequence of an ideological campaign waged over at least two centuries (Badinter, 1982) creating an uncomfortable climate for working mothers.

> Mother's responsibilites are awesome enough. But even if you can juggle the schedule, get to work on time, get children to the dentist, and find good childcare that you can afford, you still may not feel comfortable with the decision. (Scarr and Dunn, 1987:15-16)

After the second World War there was a resurgence of the 'mother-care' ethic. This was a period of economic growth. Many families experienced economic stability not known for many years. They were now able to support themselves on a single income. During the war years women and mothers had been encouraged into the work place to replace the male labour force lost to the war effort. After the war, the returning servicemen needed work, so women/mothers occupying 'their' jobs had to be encouraged back into the home. During the war years mothers' work outside the home had been legitimised because times were not 'normal'. After the war the situation was expected to return to 'normal'. Women were expected, and many wanted, to return to their 'rightful' place within the domestic sphere - caring for husbands and children. There was considerable coercion for women to do the 'right' thing. The media - magazines, newspapers and the new technology of television - as well as the Church, sent 'messages' about what 'ideal' families should be like and how the various actors in the family should play their roles. Science also played its part in getting things back to 'normal'. The work of researchers such as Goldfarb (1943), Spitz (1945), Bowlby (1951), and Baer (1954) was used to defend traditional 'mother-care' and to resist the 'other-care' which was widely used during the war years. There was more than an element of delusion at work. The work of these researchers was focussed on children in long term institutional care, not on children in day care.

Bowlby more than anyone else influenced and continues to influence mothers, professionals in the medical and early childhood fields, as well as government agencies and governments themselves.

> He has had so much influence that many people who should know better seem to have forgotten that he did not actually write about normal mothers and children in normal situations. His ideas were transposed onto them. (Dally, 1983:84)

Theories justifying the isolation of mothers and children have assisted professionals to become powerful and have enabled governments to avoid investing money in services for women and children. Whereas Bowlby's concept of 'maternal deprivation' has been useful to an understanding of some serious consequences of inappropriate care in children's early lives, Rutter (1982b) asserts that what is needed is a qualification of what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate care together with an assessment of the reasons why individual children respond in

different ways. The early childhood field has certainly concerned itself with the microsystem of child care and to some extent with the meso-system. The macrosystem of child care has been however largely ignored. It is within this last area of concern where an explanation can be found for the reason why Bowlby's work has been taken out of context and applied inappropriately to day care. The explanation is inextricably linked to wider societal issues. Bowlby's work has served to support social and economic structures within a patriarchal, capitalist society. The 'ideal' family in such a society is self-reliant, nurturing and economically self-contained. Bowlby's concept of attachment (Bowlby, 1969) has been infiltrated into public, private and professional perceptions of ideal child rearing leading to a generalised belief that only mothers can provide for children their every need. The function of the family in childrearing is vigorously protected in traditional ideologies. Intrusion by 'others' is only legitimised if the family is deviant (ie, neglectful, abusing, poor). Under these circumstances intrusion is considered benevolent or philanthropic. The original day nurseries in Australia were created and legitimised within the early childhood field on this basis.

Child care, however, is quite different. By running contrary to traditional value systems it poses a serious threat (Scarr, Phillips and McCartney, 1989). Day care services provide for families who are not inadequate nor deviant and thus they cannot and should not be justified. The dichotomy between education and care is rooted in the fundamental dilemma concerning public versus private responsibility for child rearing. This dichotomy manifests itself clearly in the existence of educational services, such as state preschools and community kindergartens, on the one hand, which serve to support traditionally organised families, and care services, on the other hand, which provide alternative childrearing venues.

The early childhood field expresses a belief in meeting the needs of children. Early childhood services purport to respond to the needs of children and their families. Yet clearly not all services are available to all families on an equitable basis. State preschools and community kindergartens, for example, can be viewed as:

> ...those gardens of privilege that offer only limited time sessions, with highly paid professionals, in premises unused and closed to other urgent family caring needs for most of the working year. (Edgar 1991:iii)

For although they provide children with access to teachers through part-time places, these educational services cannot be easily accessed by children of working parents. Very few part-time working parents work for 2½ hours a day - a state preschool session. The question then becomes, how do these preschool children 'cope'? The answer is that some experience a 'patchwork' day consisting of a combination of 'backyard care', centre-based care, family day care, in conjunction with the preschool or kindergarten. Tragically, for some families, the patchwork gymnastics required of their children are just 'too much' and for these

families education services may not be an option. It may well be more expedient to use 'backyard care' which may range from 'very good', although unsupervised, to appalling and dangerous.

Other families attempt to meet their children's needs by using care services which may be community or commercially run. In those States and Territories where legislation dictates the presence of a teacher on the equivalent basis to preschools and kindergartens these could be said to be providing an equitable service. However there are some States and Territories where such legislation does not exist. For children and for their families in these locations the dichotomy between education and care services would appear to represent an issue of social justice and equity. In this context can the early childhood field continue to espouse the importance of 'continuity' for children when its very structures militate against such continuity? Further, what has happened to the espoused ideal of a free preschool education for all?

In general terms, in relation to hours of operation, it could be stated that education services dictate to families, whereas care services respond to families. Some care services are more responsive than others, for example 24 hour centre based care and family day care are flexible enough to cater for 'out-of-hours', seasonal and emergency care, as well as full-time and part-time 'within hours' care.

Early childhood policy makers should be assessing the relevance of their aims and the direction of their services with the future in mind and not the past.

Education and care services should be fully integrated at the bureaucratic as well as at the operational levels to meet the very real and pressing needs of families for the future. Resistance strategies aimed at maintaining the status quo and at propping-up traditional ideologies and services should be recognised for what they are. A case in point is the current debate concerning preschool provision. On this particular issue some state education departments are promoting the discussion of options which will allow for either the integration of preschool and child care programs or the integration of preschool and primary school programs; whereas other state education departments have determined that the provision should be an integration of preschool with the primary school curriculum, that is, P-10 Curriculum. Only the integration of preschool and child care programs is a viable option for real change. The integration with primary school represents 'change-which-is-no-change' within a traditional ideology, for it represents the maintenance of the status quo in terms of actual preschool provision.

The early childhood field needs to constantly reassess its services, evaluating them in response to such questions as:

- who are they serving?
- who are they not serving?

- are they responding to their community or is their community responding to them?
- are they supporting children and their families or are they dictating to them?

Many would argue that this type of evaluation and assessment does occur. If this is the case, why then are early childhood education services traditionally organised when the social context is rapidly changing? Why then are children experiencing 'patchwork' days? Battersby (1989) suggests a possible reason. He describes the early childhood field as over-psychologised in orientation toward services for young children and their families. He cites the field's non reflective and non-critical stand as the reason why dominant perceptions, cognitions and preferences of early childhood services remain unchallenged. This orientation is part of the defense strategy of the traditionalists to protect, reinforce and legitimise the status quo. Most commentaries on early childhood services from within the early childhood field are superficial and selectively descriptive and have the effect of 'maintenance orientation'; that is, "maintaining a constant supply of personnel who have particular characteristics, aptitudes and values" (Battersby, 1989:80).

Family day care as a child care service is problematic to the early childhood field - "...(it) has been the Cinderella of child care, yet it is here that much of the hard work is done" (Edgar, 1991:i). Family day care has been marginalised by both educationists and by proponents of centre-based care. Educationists, who in the early 1970s were being pressured by government to accept child care services, appeared to prefer family day care as a softer, less threatening option as it seemed to fit into their traditional notions of family and family life. Now, however, owing to its very size and extent, it is seen as a very large threat indeed[4]. Further the lack of 'qualified' careproviders is seen by some educationists and by some centre-based careworkers to undermine the notion of 'professional' early childhood worker. Rather than accepting family day care as an equal but different early childhood service, defense strategies have been mounted within the early childhood field in order to 'cool out' this undesirable element[5]. Thus family day care has only token involvement and representation in mainstream early childhood activities despite the extent of service provision. The feminist movement of the 1970s and early 1980s also served to alienate the family day care field from the main child care debate. Family day care services were criticised by some feminists for reinforcing and perpetuating women's domesticity (eg. Cox, 1983). However, more recent feminist research indicates that careproviders in family day care:

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[4] Data from the *Utilisation Trends in Family Day Care* National Research Project indicate that in the survey period (July-September 1989) some 38,152 Australian children were involved in family day care schemes (Petrie, 1991a).

[5] Some personnel in some family day care schemes believe "the community has an hierarchical view of child care services which impacts negatively upon family day care. It is stated that centrebased care is viewed as a more secure long term option for children than family day care, that in the professional field of early childhood and in the community in general, family day care is seen as an inferior option for families". (Petrie, 1991a:162).

> build upon their positive feelings and high self-concept in terms of their abilities within the home to seek other forms of paid employment in the wider work-place. Thus family day care is used as a 'stepping stone' out of the home. (Petrie, 1991b:5)

In this context family day care as a social system can best be understood as a pattern of accommodation and resistance to the prevailing social order.

The early childhood field must ensure that it meets the requirements and standards set for other disciplines if it wishes to be considered seriously as professional. A basic tenet for early childhood practices with children is to accept unqualifyingly all children as individuals with unique characteristics. The belief appears to falter when confronted by 'difference' and 'change'. Despite the fact that "It is hard to make an act of identification with a person who is so very different from the way you are yourself" (Steedman, 1985) the early childhood field must be seen to 'practice what it preaches'. This necessitates an acceptance of a wide range of attitudes and beliefs and an acceptance of an eclectic range of services for children and their families. Early childhood committees and associations, editorial committees of magazines and journals, selection panels for jobs, awards, scholarships and conferences, must ensure that they follow professional procedures. These procedures should include selection and evaluation not on the basis of personal or ideological suitability but on the basis of academic standard, potential contribution to new knowledge, as well as on the basis of service provision.

The early childhood field needs to look forward. It needs to avoid conformity to conventional roles and expectations. Early childhood services are human services which should be carried out for males and females by males and females. Blinkers need to be removed to allow wider societal circumstances to be considered. The schism between education and care and the divisions among care services must be resolved. Solidarity must be encouraged within the field to provide a strong basis for advocating future policy and practice which empowers and liberates both women and children. Imaginations within the field of early childhood and within society in general must be stretched to discover new visions and new structures in which caring is valued and where institutions genuinely facilitate caring.

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CHAPTER 3

PRACTICE AND PROFESSIONALISM: A POSITIVE ETHOS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

Jocelynne Scutt

This chapter looks at the way in which 'women's work' has not been properly evaluated in industrial law, tax law and allied areas. It shows how this works against the interest of early childhood workers, as well as women working in other spheres. The importance of valuing the work in early childhood is emphasised, together with the need for workers to adopt a professional view of themselves and their work and to value the abilities women have developed in the field, of cooperative leadership and relational skills.

The care and education of children, although paid lipservice as being 'vital' to the community (and nation's) wellbeing, in practical and remunerative terms, takes its place low on the rungs of the ladder of concern and commendation. A large part of the problem lies, however, in a dichotomy which has been developed and nurtured within the early childhood sphere itself.

In her article, Petriet 1988:27) writes:

> Early childhood networks in Australia historically have concerned themselves with traditional notions of family, family life, mothering and motherhood, emphasizing aspects of 'good' childrearing practices and 'ideal' family environments. Thus, parent programs, publications, seminars and conferences have consistently addressed - and by doing so, reinforced - these issues. The 'working mother' syndrome and notions of childcare were viewed as anathema by early childhood policy-makers.

This dichotomising of child care and early childhood education is fatal to any attempt to raise the status of the care of children, including that part of care which today is labelled 'early childhood education'.

It is time for a change in the recognition in real terms, of the value of child care and early childhood education. This change will not come about until dominant attitudes are altered, and the way in which our culture regards children and their care changed. Yet it is vital to acknowledge that fundamental to this change is a need for those working in early childhood services to recognise the links between all forms of child care. Singling out early childhood education from child care as a whole, ironically, reinforces the way in which the importance of care and education of young children is denied.

LEGAL RECOGNITION OF CHILD CARE

WORK, INCOME AND CHILD CARE EXPENSES: THE CASE OF THE PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALLER

In 1971, Mr Ballesty, a professional footballer, claimed a deduction for his car expenses in travelling between his home and the football field, for matches played on his club's homeground, as well as for travel between his home and matches 'away'. Whilst allowing the latter expenses as deductible under the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1936*, the Commissioner of Taxation refused Mr Ballesty's claim for the expenses from home to his own club's ground. Mr Ballesty appealed to the Taxation Board of Review. His appeal was upheld. The Commissioner then appealed to the Supreme Court.

The Commissioner argued that the expenditure was not deductible, because it was incurred to enable Mr Ballesty, the taxpayer, to **commence** the operations by which he earned his income, and was not expenditure made **in the course of earning** that income. This, argued the Commissioner, was the proper application of the *Income Tax Assessment Act*, where section 51(1) provides that expenditure is deductible only where it is a loss or outgoing:

> ... incurred in gaining or producing assessable income, or necessarily incurred in carrying on a business for the purpose of gaining or producing such income...,

except to the extent to which the expenditure is a loss or outgoing of capital, or of a capital, private or domestic nature.

For Mr Ballesty, it was said that he had to carry with him his football gear, weighing from 12 to 20 lbs. (It was laundered, at home, by his mother.) Additionally, temperamental factors militated against his travelling other than alone in his car: he suffered emotional stress before a game, and travelling with others, or on public transport, was not (he argued) conducive to arriving in a calm, unstressed and peaceful frame of mind so to enable him to play football in a professional manner, and thus to earn his income.

In 1977 the Supreme Court dismissed the appeal, thus upholding Mr Ballesty's arguments. Justice Waddell said:

> [There is] the practical necessity ... of travelling by motor vehicle to and from matches and training sessions. The taxpayer had under his contract with the football club a continuing obligation to "do everything necessary to get and keep himself in the best possible condition so as to render the most efficient service to the club". He was, therefore ... under a contractual obligation to travel to and from training and matches in a way which would enable him to perform at his best; to fulfil this obligation it was necessary for him to travel in his own motor car; accordingly, the expenditures in question should be seen as having their occasion in an activity which was productive of the assessable income or, to use the words of the section, as having been incurred in gaining the assessable income. (Australian Taxation Commission, 1977:184)

His Honour said it was "necessary for [Mr Ballesty] to travel in his own vehicle to matches and to training sessions in order to produce his best form". The expenditure was necessary so that Mr Ballesty could "fit himself to make the best contribution he could to the winning of the match or to the success of the training sessions to or from which he was travelling".

In 1972 the High Court held that child care expenses were not tax deductible. Ms Lodge, working on a freelance basis for a law firm, first thought she could care for her child at home whilst doing the work (taxing bills of costs). She discovered - as most mothers do - that she could not devote the necessary attention to her paid

work, whilst being obliged to keep an eye on her young daughter. She therefore placed the child in care during those periods she set aside for the law firm. The court held that although the purpose of the expenditure was that of gaining assessable income, it did not take place in, or in the course of, the work by which Ms Lodge earned her income. Further, it was of a 'private or domestic' nature[1].

Since *Lodge's case* and *Ballesty's case*, taxpayers (mainly woman) have put forward arguments for child care as tax deductible expenses which fit well within the *Ballesty* principal. Thus Ms Martin (a steno-secretary) argued it was essential, for her work, that she arrive at her place of business, and be able to remain working there, in a calm, unstressed and peaceful frame of mind. This was possible only, she said, when she was confident her child was properly cared for. That care could take place only in circumstances where she paid for the care on a professional basis. Her claim was rejected by the Commissioner, and by the courts[2].

Another woman (also a steno-secretary) argued both that she was required by her employer to be proficient in her job, which was possible only if her child was properly and professionally cared for; and further, that she was under a legal obligation to ensure that proper care: criminal laws and child welfare laws place a legislative requirement on parents to ensure their children are adequately maintained and cared for. Her claim was similarly rejected (Scutt, 1990).

ATTITUDES AND OBLIGATIONS: 'WOMEN'S PLACE' AS TEACHERS

The notion that Mr Ballesty's requirements for playing professional football, and Ms Martin's (and any other woman with child care obligations) requirements for undertaking her stenosecretarial work can be differentiated - that is, that her calm frame of mind and professionalism are a lesser consideration than Mr Ballesty's calm frame of mind and professionalism - is a nonsense. Similarly, the idea that Mr Ballesty's car expenses are directly relevant to the earning by him of assessable income, where as Ms Martin's child care expenses are not, is not logically sustainable. As well, that child care expenses are 'private or domestic' whatever their purpose, whereas Mr Ballesty's car expenses in the context in which he expended them are not, is out of kilter with the reality: that many expenses (including travel and child care) are 'private or domestic' in one context, yet in the context of paid employment are not.

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1 Lodge v Commissioner of Taxation (1972) 128 CLR 171.

2 Martin v Federal Minister of Taxation (1983) 3 NSWLR 74; 1983 83 ATC 4,722; (1988) 2 FCR 260.

This application of a seemingly neutral principle - that expenses are tax deductible where they are incurred in gaining or producing assessable income, or necessarily incurred in carrying on a business for the purpose of gaining or producing assessable income, except to the extent to which the expenditure is a loss or outgoing of capital, or of a capital, private or domestic nature - illustrates well the problem of attitudes toward 'women's work' and the differential value placed on 'women's work' and 'men's work'.

Although the problem apparently relates only to the position of women who are mothers, and who wish to engage in paid employment, the problem is far broader. It reveals an attitude (and assumptions) toward child care and kindergarten, to organised preschool activities and early childhood education, and to the work of women both as professionals in diverse spheres and professionals in the child care and early education sphere, and to the unpaid work of woman as mothers. It is this attitude which interferes with the recognition and acknowledgement of early education as professional work which is vital to children's initial wellbeing, and to their future development and attainments.

The care of children has long been regarded solely as the preserve of women. When women fought for entry into higher education, an argument used against them was that the development of their intellect would inevitably lead to poor development (or atrophy) of their ability to bear and suckle children. Courts were regaled with 'expert' evidence asserting that if woman were permitted to attend and study at universities, the blood which was essential for the proper nurturance of their wombs (whether with child or not) would rush to their heads, so depriving their physical bodies from the possibility of fulfilment of their 'woman's role' (Scutt, 1985).

In order to gain the right to intellectual development through higher education, women sometimes fashioned arguments appealing to the motherhood role as fundamental to all women. They argued that advanced education and the expansion of women's minds was essential **because** they would become mothers. A child should have a thinking, well-educated mother rather than one with inferior educational qualifications, they said; thus university was an essential prerequisite for women. Other women argued the right to education as a right in itself, for all women, whether single, married, mothers, potential mothers or not. Yet the former argument, based as it was in the biological character of women, gained greatest coverage (Summers, 1985).

It was not far to step from this position, into one which said that if women are to be educated, then the appropriate sphere is that of kindergarten teaching, teaching in general, early childhood education and the like. Vocational guidance for schoolgirls for many years (and the concentration today is even similar) consisted of a direction that girls who were not in the secretarial stream 'should' go into

nursing - or teaching. The emphasis was on caring and nurturing roles for girls and women, whether in the world of the married woman full-time at home, or of those unmarried and engaging in paid work.

LACK OF RECOGNITION OF 'WOMEN'S WORK': A TRADITIONAL BIAS

This emphasis created its own problems. Women with high intelligence entered the teaching profession at all levels. Inevitably, they experienced considerable frustration: generally, men going into teaching were far less qualified, yet were promoted to administrative and principal positions over their female counterparts. It was common in the 1950s and 1960s and into the 1970s (and no doubt before, and continuing today) for quotas to be implemented in teachers' colleges, enabling a certain percentage of less qualified male students to undertake teacher training. The idea was that teaching ought not to be solely a female preserve. (There was no similar policy for women in relation to traditional male fields - such as medicine, law, engineering and the like. Indeed, due to the limited vocational guidance available to girls, young women were unlikely to make application in these areas.)

A further problem with this approach was that a general attitude developed toward teaching, and in particular primary school, kindergarten and early childhood education generally. This notion held that teaching was not an important sphere, that 'any girl (or woman) could do it'; that the most important jobs in teaching were administrative - and that, appropriately, those men who went into teaching should fill these posts. Sadly, women too often adopted this attitude also.

This stance generally led to one of two approaches: either young women renounced their 'destiny' and threw over the notion that teaching was the 'proper place' for them; or, they became teachers and inculcated all those negative ideas about teaching not being 'important', or not as important as other vocations. Even where women held pride in their profession, they were obliged to strain against the accepted litany. For those who took up other professions, there was a strong demand, dictated by outside attitudes and beliefs, that they disassociate themselves from women who went into teaching. They grew up, and became professionals, in a world which did not regard teaching highly. Thus they were likely to adhere to the dictate of the greater world, and believe that they were 'better' because they did not follow the accepted calling of women. This served only to drive divisions between and amongst women, and to downgrade teaching as a profession even further.

Although teaching, when dominated by men (at the end of the 19th century and into the early 20th century) was held in high esteem, when women entered the profession in large numbers, regard plummeted. This is clearly measurable in monetary terms; with a male dominated profession, salaries were at higher levels; when the skills of teaching were transferred to a predominantly female group, those skills - and together with them the salaries - were downgraded.

Two arguments were used to deny women the higher salaries extended to men. One was that women were 'not as well qualified' as men - an argument which was not correct, and in instances where it was, this was due to inbuilt discrimination against women taking higher degrees or gaining administrative experience. The other was that women did not teach in the senior classes - because they were not able to do so. This ignored the fact that many women teachers were obliged to teach children at all levels: the country school was a frequent habitat of the female teacher, who had responsibility for children from 'the bubs' to the early teens. It also ignored the reality that (despite statements to the contrary) women frequently were required to teach 'unruly' students: the 'good' students were left to male teachers who were seen as having greater expertise and thus 'bright' pupils had a right to their classroom presence. 'Poor' students could be left to the female teacher, in accordance with this policy. Further, if women did not teach students in the upper levels, it was because they were prevented from doing so, by practices which effectively stated that men were appropriate teachers of the more 'advanced' classes.

Thus in 1913 when the Victorian Lady Teachers' Association made a claim for equal pay, G.C. Morrison, appointed to report to the Victorian Parliament on the matter, found that the majority of women teachers did not have university degrees; nor did they do 'equal work'. How many men teachers had university degrees? What was the basis of the determination that women did not do equal work? No woman was in charge of a school which had pupils at the level of sixth class or over. Therefore, according to Morrison, women could not be considered to be doing the same work, at any level.

> Equality of women with men, either from a physical or an intellectual viewpoint, cannot be accepted as an unimpeachable doctrine. The great things of the world have, with rare exceptions, been achieved by men, and while it is freely admitted that women has done a great deal in her own sphere of womanhood, she is, by reason of her natural frailty of body, unfitted to bear ... the physical strain inseparable from the vocation of a teacher ... in a crisis, men endure strain better than women. (Morrison, 1914:353)

More than thirty years later, similar sentiments continued to be expressed. On 21 August, 1946, the Australian Broadcasting Commission held a Nation's Forum of the Air on the topic: *Should Both Sexes Receive Equal Pay for Equal Work*. One debater said:

> Women employees seldom, if ever, can be regarded as completely interchangeable with men, even when they're working side by side on fairly similar general duties. There is always some part of the job which men, and men alone, are expected to to ... [L]et us consider a field in which it is often stated that the work performed by men and women is identical, namely, the teaching profession. In a school you find that there are men teachers and women teachers, teaching the same subjects to a similar standard and with a similar curriculum. But you seldom find, except perhaps in conditions of emergency, that a woman is in charge of the really tough classes, the unruly boys around about the age of 13 or 14. Usually, I say, you find a man is given that job. He has to teach the subjects, he has to get the same results, but the material on which he has to work is considerably more refractory. I don't say that is always so, but it is so in the major of cases. (ABC, 1946)

The research upon which the speaker based his assertion was not disclosed.

TEACHING AS 'WOMEN'S WORK': WORK VALUE AS A VALUE-LADEN CONCEPT

On the one hand there is an acceptance that caring for children is 'the most important job a woman can do'. On the other, child care - whether by mothers in the home, or child care workers and teachers of children and young people in the public sphere - is downgraded. Simultaneously runs a proposition that teaching is a most important activity and that teachers have a profound effect upon the development and intellectual growth of their pupils. At the same time, teaching is not given recognition in remunerative terms as occurs with other trades and professions.

The Australian Industrial Relations Commission and its forerunners have experienced considerable difficulty in determining how 'work value' should be measured. This difficulty has not only arisen in relation to 'women's work'. However 'women's work' - the work carried out in fields traditionally dominated by female workers - has caused more problems for evaluation by the Commission than has the valuing of work traditionally carried out by men (Federation of Australian Business and Professional Women, 1991a).

Burton and Flood analysed work value cases occurring between October, 1984 and December, 1987. They had access to 390 decisions of the Industrial Relations Commission, all of which had reference to work value. Of the 390, Burton and Flood looked at approximately 200. From these, 73 were selected to investigate whether 'gender bias' existed in work value decisions. Of the 73 decisions 51

related to work predominantly carried out by men; 22 dealt with female-dominated classifications (Federation of Australian Business and Professional Women, 1991b).

Of the 51 male-dominated areas, 40 were successful in their claim for increased pay on the basis of increased work value, and 11 were unsuccessful. Of the 22 in female-dominated areas, eight were successful and 14 unsuccessful.

Criteria employed to determine whether a change in work value might justify an increase in pay rates included:

- the use of more complex machinery, technology or equipment;
- evidence that the work demanded additional training;
- multi-skilling;
- the introduction of team work and associated responsibility for decision-making.

In areas of male-dominated work, the evidence provided to support the claim that the machinery or technology involved an increase in work value was able to be classed 'objective'. The evidence presented in cases involving female-dominated classifications did not easily fall into the same 'objective' standard.

Evidence for male-dominated classifications included size of ship or machine or vehicle; lifting and holding capacity of equipment and speed. The descriptive account of the changes in equipment or machinery was frequently lengthy and highly technical, and the language used depicted workers actively and centrally involved in the work process. The claim for increased responsibility and/or skill demanded was, in these cases, supported by the apparently objective evidence of the new technology.

The added responsibility of using new machinery appears more obvious than the added responsibility of female workers in other areas, whether their claims centre on new information technologies or other changes in the nature of work. (For example, the additional demands of child care workers and educators responding to the needs of a multicultural community.)

This highlights an inbuilt bias in approaches to work value. Machinery, being 'concrete' and its complexity a concept easily grasped, is 'objective' as opposed to relational skills and cultural appreciation and flexibility demanded of workers in child care. This does not mean work value changes in one field and not the other. It may be that there is greater complexity and demand for responsibility in child care than in the case of a job involving machinery. But the Commission did not deal with the claims so as to recognise 'subjective' measures of skill, responsibility and work value.

The Commission relies considerably on inspections to determine whether there is a change in work value. Yet in the Burton and Flood study, it was found that inspections were less likely to be held in health, child care and schools than in factories and plants. Further, a child care centre is far more difficult to inspect for work practices and increases in responsibility than is a plant where new equipment can be displayed. It is simple and straightforward to inspect machinery at a factory or plant. A different approach is required to systematically 'inspect', understand and appreciate the changing work value and utilisation of skills in a child care centre where there is no 'machinery'.

The Industrial Relations Commission decision in the *Childcare Workers Case* is a telling exemplar of the problem. The Commission recognised the importance of the work carried out by child care workers and set down principles to form the basis of a child care award for child care workers, increasing wages and instituting a career structure. However, the Commission did not look at the work value and skills exhibited by those working in the industry or profession. Rather, it hinged the decision on 'objective' measures - such as what formal qualifications are held by the workers. Certainly it is important to look at and grant recognition for these qualifications. However, it is equally vital to value the actual performance of work required in the field. This, however, appears to be 'too difficult'. Yet it is fundamental to the proper recognition of the skills, work and abilities of the profession (Fleer and Clough, 1990; Federation of Australian Business and Professional Women, 1991b).

This problem is highlighted in the current National Wage Guidelines, where 'skills' are the subject of claims for wage increases. What are 'skills'? How are they to be measured? If work traditionally performed by women has in the past been considered of lesser value than the work traditionally performed by men, then women's 'skills' will similarly be rendered less valuable. Part of the problem appears to be that there is a notion that 'neutrality' is applied when skills, work value, or 'merit' is assessed. As Margaret Thornton writes, this neutrality does not exist. It is influenced by existing biases and assumptions.

> The *Macquarie Dictionary* defines merit as "claims to commendation; excellence; worth". As a secondary meaning, it is defined as "the state or fact of deserving well; good desert". These facets of meaning reveal that merit is an ontological abstraction. Devoid of any social context, it is perceived as an apolitical criterion of personal worth. A mystique of neutrality has nevertheless endowed the concept with considerable political significance and moral persuasiveness when it is invoked to justify, to criticise, or to constrain, any policy proposals ...
>
> ... the direct or indirect exclusions of women and Aborigines from amongst those who are deemed to be the most able has little to do with the innate ability of group members. It is this traditional exclusion which has served the myth of intellectual inferiority and given rise to the view that the appointment of women or non-whites is synonymous with decline in efficiency ... Thus, while

> merit purports to maximise social utility, it does not mete out rewards in ways which are sex, race and class neutral. (Thornton, 1985:29-30)

DICHOTOMISING CHILD CARE AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Within the early childhood education field, forces have worked to dichotomise 'child care' and 'preschool education' or early childhood education generally. In the 1970s this was particularly pronounced. Sara Dowse, at the time Deputy Head and then Head of the Office of Women's Affairs in the Federal Government (now the Office of the Status of Women), writes of this dichotomy and the problems it brought with it in gaining proper and substantiative recognition of the value of the care of children, whether looked upon in terms of 'care', or in terms of 'education'.

> [T]he coalition government was able to respond quickly to the childcare demand because of the work carried out in the Department of Labour and National Service after John Gorton proposed in 1970 to provide federal government support for childcare. The policy had been shelved during the 1971 recession, but was taken down again and dusted in time for the 1972 campaign. In the 1972 to 1973 federal budget $5 million was set aside, and in October 1972 the childcare bill introduced by Phillip Lynch, then minister for Labour and National Service, became an Act.
>
> The ALP, too, was confident that its proposals met women's demands for childcare. Having responded to pressure from the Australian Pre-School Association, the party's policy was one year's free pre-school for every Australian child within six years. There was also a commitment to childcare for working parents. Yet when Labour politicians attempted to explain their policy it became obvious that they did not really perceive the difference between the two kinds of services. Unhappily, this confusion was to become a serious impediment to the development and implementation of the Whitlam government's children's services policy ... (Dowse, 1983:206)

Dowse goes on to recount how the Labour government pledged itself in the 1974 campaign to a $130 million child care program.

> Upon its return it attempted to cut back the proposed program to $34 million, but after [the Women's Electoral Lobby] protested it set aside $75 million in the 1974-1975 budget and established, pending legislation, an Interim Committee to a Children's Commission (ICCC). The ICCC was charged with developing and administering the new children's services program - an "integrated" program of care and education based on a priority of need - and was responsible to the prime minister through Lionel Bowen, his minister assisting. That meant that the new program, with its $75 million appropriation, was no longer under the aegis of the education minister or his

> department, but under the close watch of the prime minister's women's adviser and the Women's Affairs Section [of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet].
> (Dowse, 1983:206)

As MacIntyre illustrates, the notion was strongly abroad in 1974 to 1975 that early childhood education was 'at loggerheads' with child care, and the involvement of women (who were mothers of young children) in the paid workforce.

> The Australian Preschool Association, itself in receipt of government funds, actively agitate[d] against childcare to the extent of sending home leaflets pinned to children's jumpers exhorting mothers not to go out to work.
> (MacIntyre, 1985:125)

Yet simultaneously, traditional (and some would say conservative) institutions were recognising the influx of women into the paid workforce, and the reality that the world would not change back to a time when it was supposed that 'mothers didn't work (sic)' or that 'mother's **shouldn't** work'. In *Sharman v Evans*, decided by the High Court in 1977, Justice Gibbs and Stephen, and Justice Murphy, acknowledged this, Justice Murphy saying:

> ... the notion underlying earlier cases that women retired automatically from the workforce on marriage is no longer correct. The most important social change recently is that women now form a large part, almost half of the [paid] workforce[1].

In the 1990s, there is a greater recognition of this reality, both within the early childhood field and outside it. Yet this had not brought with it a uniform approach throughout Australia and, as Petrie describes, the deep-rooted implications of traditional ideologies are still evident.

> For example, wider societal perceptions of "motherly"/"womanly" qualities are deemed as being appropriate for personnel working in the early childhood field. One immediate consequence of this is a general devaluing of the role of "professional early childhood worker" resulting in marginal status not least in the eyes of other professionals ...
>
> The very qualities that are deemed to be appropriate for those working with young children are the very qualities that militate against the search for parity of professional status or the pursuit of industrial issues. Again, these very qualities militate against the active pursuit of status within the profession or of the search for positions of power and influence. (Petrie, 1988:28)

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[1] Sharman v Evans (1977) 138 CLR 563, 5...4

TOWARD A PROPER RECOGNITION OF WORK AND PROFESSIONALISM IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

The answer to the problem of recognition of work in early childhood and the value of the qualifications and experience of the professionals committed to this sphere, is not to continue to downgrade those qualities which are seen as 'female'. Rather, it is to begin to readjust the evaluation of traditional abilities and capabilities of women in child care and early childhood education[4].

This is not to say that we must laud characteristics that are not positive for women, for student educators, or for children as pupils and child care participants. But it is to demand a re-evaluation of what is a 'positive' characteristic and what is not. It is also to reassess our vision of 'leadership'.

It is not good for children to grow up in a world where 'women's role' is seen as necessarily one of subordination. Nor is it good for children to be reared, surrounded by female 'role models' who exemplify the perpetually unselfish, determinedly cheerful, self-abnegating icon. At the same time, overturning these paradigms is not to say that 'professionalism' demands selfishness, a lack of altruism, a morose approach in the light of difficulties, and self-absorbtion or overweening ego-centricism.

Rather, the relational skills that many women have developed as a consequence of women's position in the social and political hierarchy must be given proper recognition in evaluations of work and assessments by industrial relations commissions and other wage-fixing bodies. This in itself will begin to alter the structures and hierarchies.

The notion of 'leadership' as a quality exhibited by persons who approach a problem with a co-operative and consultative style needs reinforcement. The idea that the more machinery or super-technology for which one has responsibility, the more important and responsible one's job, whereas the care, control and education of children is less important and responsible must be routed.

These changes will not come about simply because women - or workers in early childhood services—think they're a good idea. At the same time, the dominant

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[4] At the 1990-1991 National Wage Case the Australian Federation of Business and Professional Women in its submission advocated the holding, by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, a Work Skills Value Enquiry (WSVE) to evaluate skills with particular attention paid to 'women's skills'. (That is, skills women have traditionally acquired, but which have not been given adequate or proper recognition.) The Commission held that such an enquiry was not necessary, despite the extensive examples provided by AFBPW in its Submission of the Commission's own confusion as to what are 'skills' and how they should or can be valued. The confusion was shown to extend to unions and employer bodies.

ideology will not change without agitation and well-thought through demands from those who work directly in the field, and from those who are supportive.

It is important for all concerned to ensure that children have a right to positive educational and care programs and that workers in these programs be acknowledged as professionals and recognise the importance of working together. Just as children's education cannot be undertaken by those who are unqualified, nor can child care. Indeed, the intertwining of 'care' and 'education' should not be denied. Rather, this gives strength to the demand that child care workers and child educators are professionals working together toward a goal of positive care, rearing and education for all children.

Ultimately, if early childhood educators do not adopt a professional approach emphasising the importance of relational and co-operative leadership skills, their students can hardly be blamed for failing to value themselves, their work or their profession. As Lambert (1989:57) claims: "students very quickly acquire that healthly cynicism which results from a perceptive ability to identify those of us who are out of touch". Cynicism is far better than mute acceptance, but it is preferable to be taught by those who are 'in touch' and who bring to themselves a healthy respect.

The early childhood field is peopled predominantly with women. Women have, as a consequence of what in the past was seen as a 'woman's place' (and continues so to be seen by some), played a central role in the care and education of children. It is important to acknowledge and build upon that role in a way that develops and nurtures the strengths of the workers in the field and the educators in the colleges. Ultimately, if the educators, and as a consequence of their approach, the workers, fail to do this, then it can be no surprise if traditional views of women, work, children and education remain.

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CHAPTER 4

ACCREDITATION: A RIGHT FOR ALL AUSTRALIA'S YOUNG CHILDREN OR A WASTE OF TIME AND MONEY

June Wangmann

This chapter deals with the concept of a national accreditation system for children's services. The issues of a model for accreditation, its content and viability and who should be responsible are discussed.

The Prime Minister, The Rt Hon Mr R.J. Hawke, in his election speech of 8th March 1990, stated:

> Parents are entitled to be confident they are getting quality attention for their kids whether they are using government funded or commercial centres. So we will work with all the key interests in child care to develop a system of accreditation. (p9)

Throughout all sectors of the children's services industry, a great deal of interest and controversy has been generated by this election commitment. Program accreditation has probably been the most discussed topic in the children's services field during the past year. While there has been considerable enthusiasm for the concept, there has also emerged much anxiety, confusion and a plethora of misinformation. The topic has been debated in some instances without any real understanding of the issues or processes involved.

The concept of a national accreditation process for children's services is not new to the early childhood field. In fact, interest in the concept goes back many years and has evolved primarily out of a growing concern about quality. Since 1984, interest in program accreditation has increased as a result of the success of the voluntary accreditation process established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), which is now in its fifth year of operation in the United States (Bredekamp, 1984). The NAEYC system has demonstrated clearly its capacity to improve quality (Bredekamp, 1990a). Many people believe that a similar voluntary accreditation process should be encouraged in Australia.

Approaches to voluntary accreditation usually contain certain common elements. There is an initial process of self reflection/evaluation which involves the identification of strengths and areas requiring further work with reference to professionally agreed upon criteria. When centre staff consider that the identified changes have brought about the desired level of quality, the accuracy of the evaluative data collected by the centre staff is verified by appropriately qualified and trained individuals. Finally, on the basis of the information received from all parties, an accreditation decision is made by a panel of recognised experts in their field. Essentially, a voluntary approach to accreditation is grass-roots driven, and the power to accredit remains with the children's services field itself.

The Federal Government's recent interest in accreditation of children's services programs has extended the dimensions of the debate. This extension has confronted those in the field with many complex issues and has forced them to consider accreditation more broadly than previously. Many children's services personnel are concerned that the resolution of these issues will involve compromises which pose a threat to some of the core values of their profession. Government interest in accreditation reflects the current emphasis on public accountability, quality of service, and professionalism in many spheres of service provision. For

the children's services field, therefore, the challenge is to ensure that core early childhood values are seen to be a central element of a quality service, and that this is reflected in the accreditation procedures which are developed.

In all discussion about program accreditation, it is essential that accreditation is not isolated from other current issues and problems which are confronting the children's services field. For example, staff training, shortage of staff and retention of staff are not only issues of concern in themselves, but are also factors which have a profound influence on the quality of service provision. In the past, particularly at the government policy level, there has been a tendency to deal with issues and problems in isolation, and a failure to recognize the interrelationship between such matters. To a lesser extent, this tendency has been present within the children's services field. Dealing with issues in isolation has been the main contributing factor to problems facing the field today.

If we are to shape an effective and efficient future, the overcoming of this conceptual limitation, combined with a collaborative approach between key interest groups, is necessary. A good national system of accreditation will not become a reality unless this collaboration occurs. Without equal attention being given to factors such as the quality of staff needed to develop and implement good programs, and to the costs involved, setting up a program accreditation system would be a waste of time and resources.

Following the Prime Minister's policy speech in March, 1990, the Federal Government set up an Accreditation Consultative Committee in June, 1990. This committee was formed by the Hon. Mr Peter Staples, Minister for the Aged, Family and Health Services, and has been chaired by Ms Mary Crawford, Federal Member for Forde. Membership of the committee comprised representatives from the commercial sector, union organisations, the non-profit sector and the Children's Services National Advisory Committee. During the latter part of 1990, the Consultative Committee met on three occasions. The terms of reference required the committee to:

- assess a range of possible child care accreditation options;
- make recommendations to the Minister for the Aged, Family and Health Services on an accreditation system which would:
  - over time, encourage consistent standards and improve quality across the child care industry in Australia;
  - facilitate involvment of all interested parties (including providers in all sectors, staff and parents, state and local government, and the child care unions) in the setting and maintenance of standards;
  - achieve a standard of care which provides quality outcomes for children and parents at an affordable cost to users and government;
  - be a complementary system to state/territory licensing regulations;

- provide a draft report to the Minister for the Aged, Family and Health Services by the end of July, 1990, setting out the Committee's recommendations for a national accreditation system;
- provide a final report to the Minister for the Aged, Family and Health Services by the end of September, 1990, following further consultation on the draft report.

Many key interest groups throughout Australia provided submissions to the Committee and responded to the draft recommendations. The main recommendations made to the minister were:

- that the Minister establish an independant national body representative of all the interest groups in children's sevices to oversee the total accreditation process.
- that the national body set up a working unit which would be responsible to it. The initial task of the working unit would be the development of criteria for a national accreditation system.
- that accreditation be a two phase process. The first phase, which is referred to as Module 1 for convenience, would be mandatory and would be linked to the conditions for fee relief. The second phase would be a voluntary process. (Accreditation Consultative Committee, 1990)

The involvement of the Federal Government has shifted the concept of accreditation from a concept of voluntary accreditation to a more complex concept which combines elements of mandatory and voluntary accreditation. As a result of this shift, all children's services must concern themselves with the issues which underpin the development of a national accreditation system; not some children's services, but all. A realistic timeframe however is essential to provide all groups with an adequate period for reflection and decision making.

Some key questions which have emerged and need to be considered as part of this reflection and decision-making process are as follows.

- What would be the value of a national accreditation system for Australian children's services?
- Can Australia afford a national accreditation system?
- On what principles should accreditation be based?
- What criteria will be employed in the accreditation process?
- Who should be responsible for the development and implementation of a national accreditation system?

The over-riding question at the heart of much rather emotive discussion focuses on the value of the accreditation process... is it **REALLY** necessary?

Growth in all forms of child care in Australia has highlighted the inadequacies of the states' and territories' regulations and licensing procedures. These inadequacies are compounded by the lack of consistency across the states and territories. For example some states require staff to have relevant training, others do not. Essentially, children in some states are getting a better deal than are children in other states. Such a lack of consistency raises questions related to equity and social justice.

The rapid expansion of child care provision has led to an increasing awareness that some settings in which young children spend the bulk of their time do not provide good quality experiences for those children. The resultant concern about the quality of the children's present lives has been directly linked to a growing concern about the long term effects of poor early childhood experiences on children's development. The major goal of all accreditation approaches in children's services is to improve the quality of the programs provided for young children and their families.The terms of reference of the Accreditation Consultative Committee include this objective.

Some groups within the children's services field consider accreditation to be a totally unnecessary process and a waste of time and of money. This opinion is based on the premise that, through meeting state regulations, a service has met the required quality levels. Therefore, accreditation is seen to be a mere duplication, yet another set of regulations.

Accreditation and regulations serve different purposes; both address quality, but at different levels. Regulations address the predictors of quality such as staff qualifications, sizes of groups and ratio of adults to children. Regulations provide a necessary floor from which to build. However, regulations are mandatory; they require 100% compliance. This mandatory nature exerts a pressure towards a minimum standard of compliance. Essentially, regulations can be seen as a set of variables which allow one to make predictions about the **possible quality** of the service, **but they cannot ensure that the service is of good quality**.

Accreditation builds on this floor, going beyond minimum standards to look at the real indicators of quality; what is actually happening in the service. For example, regulations may require the keeping of a written program, but they do not provide guidelines about the content of the program, the processes through which the program is developed or the processes through which the program is enacted. Evaluation of the content and the processes through which the program is developed and implemented are part of the accreditation process. This example is an illustration of the way in which accreditation builds on regulations to ensure that good quality experiences are provided by the service, rather than merely duplicating regulations.

The preceding discussion is based on the premise that the concept of quality can be defined. People who work in the children's services field believe that quality is instantly recognizable. However, the early childhood profession is increasingly being attacked for its rather nebulous definitions of quality. Frequent reference is being made to yet another 'warm fuzzy' notion like the 'whole child'. The profession has to be able to answer its critics; being able to do this is the first task in any accreditation process. It is no longer acceptable to substitute meaningless rhetoric for clear definition. The knowledge of what constitutes good quality and how to provide this has been established by extensive research in recent years (Phillips, 1987). The children's services field needs to be able to articulate clearly this knowledge to others outside the profession.

When defining quality, particularly in the context of accreditation, it is essential to be able to clearly convey the level of quality to which Australian children's services should aspire. Program accreditation should be concerned with the level of standards to which all Australian children should have access. It should not be conceived of as an elitist system that can be achieved by a few 'top' services (the five star hotel approach).

Development and promotion of an elitist system would be a waste of time and resourses for all involved. The experience of the NAEYC in the United States provides evidence that accreditation is an achievable goal that can be reached by the average service. Since 1986, the NAEYC has accredited 1400 services and has enrolled a further 3710 programs in self study. These services represent the whole spectrum of service types and socio-economic diversity (NAEYC Annual Report, 1990:44).

The definitions of quality which are used by NAEYC and other early childhood groups have been arrived at through extensive research on the topic and also through a process of concensus within the early childhood profession. Research over the last 10 years has consistantly indicated certain key predictors of positive outcomes for young children which can be related to the following aspects of quality. They are programs:

- which are licensed;
- in which the child's interaction with the caregiver is frequent, verbal and educational, rather than custodial and controlling;
- in which children are not left to spend their time in aimless play together;
- in which there is an adequate adult child ratio and a reasonable group size; and
- in which the caregiver has training in child development, some degree of professional experience in child care and has been in the program for some period of time. (Bredekamp, 1990a:39)

These research findings are in keeping with the standards that have been developed in the NAEYC accreditation model. These standards have been derived from what is known about how children of different ages learn and develop. The system is based on the premise that although there are individual differences among children, including cultural and language differences, there are certain needs and interests that are shared by children at certain stages in their development.

CAN AUSTRALIA AFFORD A NATIONAL ACCREDITATION SYSTEM ?

It is all very well to talk about good quality programs, but providing good quality costs money. The way in which increased costs will be met is a growing concern across the children's services field. At the moment, children in poor quality programs are bearing the cost. "When the costs of quality are not paid, children pay the price by experiencing early childhood programs of unacceptable quality" (Willer, 1988:2). Society also pays the price "when an entire generation of children is ill-prepared to serve as effectively functioning, self sufficient members of society" (Willer, 1988:2). Given these facts, it is difficult to argue that the current methods of meeting costs are either just and equitable, or cost effective.

The implications of award restructuring are a major consideration for children's services in Australia. Although award restructuring has provided recognition of the value of early childhood work through the provision of higher wages and salaries and this recognition has been welcomed by the children's services field, the increased costs create a problem for services. Clearly, this increased cost cannot be met by families. The industrial cost, along with other general costs, impinges on the development of a national accreditation system. There are also some costs specific to accreditation; the initial one being the actual funds required to set up such a process.

If government funds are made available, it would be essential that this be in the form of a special new allocation and that the funds are not derived from a reallocation of existing funds for the children's services program. At present, program support funds are inadequate; if these scant resources are used to support the establishment of an accreditation system, the process would be self defeating. Should funds not be forthcoming from government sources, the finding of alternative sources will present a challenge to the children's services field. This would not be an easy task.

It will be difficult to estimate the establishment and the ongoing costs for a national accreditation system until more details regarding the proposed infrastructure and the nature of the accreditation model are available.

The actual cost to services undertaking the accreditation process has been raised by most interest groups. Services are concerned that they may not be able to afford the additional costs. At present, these concerns cannot be allayed because we have no accurate figures for services in Australia. However, as a guide, the NAEYC system bases the fee on the number of children enrolled in the service. For fewer than 60 children the initial outlay is US$50 for the purchase of the self study materials and US$200 for validation and accreditation covering a three year period.

There are also certain hidden costs to consider. These costs involve the time given by staff to participate in the accreditation process. In certain instances, this may extend beyond normal working hours and this time should not be seen as unpaid time. The way in which such costs would be met in an accreditation system remains a crucial issue. Obviously, the success of any accreditation system established in this country is going to depend largely on the adequacy of funds made available. These funds will need to cover costs to services and payment for staff time. Working towards providing good quality services for all our young children is going to be expensive. However, the key question to consider is not **can we afford to do it ?** but **can we afford not to ?**

ON WHAT MODEL SHOULD ACCREDITATION BE BASED ?

All models of accreditation have their critics. Prior to government interest in accreditation, the concept was conceived of as being purely a voluntary process by the children's services field. Critics of this model assert that such a process does nothing to improve quality in services which are not motivated to undertake accreditation voluntarily.

The Consultative Committee suggested that accreditation be a two phase process; the first phase being linked to fee relief funding and the second phase being voluntary. This model has generated much controversy and debate. Criticisms have included that such a model is unnecessary as services are already accredited by state/territory licensing and regulations.

An accreditation model which has a mandatory element is a new concept for the Australian children's services community. However, this model is not new in the international children's services field. For example, South Carolina has developed a state system which is based on an adaption of the NAEYC model. This system, linked to state funding, is referred to as *The Child Development Quality Assurance Standards*. A weighted value between 1 and 25 is assigned to each criteria in order to reflect its relative importance in relation to the overall score. A

service is not expected to achieve 100% compliance, but a score of less than 70% indicates that the service is a cause for concern (Child Development Quality Assurance Standards, 1990).

The Australian early childhood profession needs to guard against adopting an overly purist approach to accreditation. During the next few years, the challenge will be to adopt an open and flexible attitude which will enable the consideration of a broad range of possibilities, while retaining a commitment to developmentally appropriate practice with young children in group settings.

WHAT WILL BE THE CONTENT OF ACCREDITATION ?

Early discussions regarding content have tended to focus on the possibility of an introductory section linked to fee relief. Consideration of this possibility has led to questions regarding the standards which should be met in this introductory phase, about assessment procedures, and about the form of resource and inservice provision which would be necessary for services to meet the mandatory components.

Unfortunately, the narrow focus of these early discussions has limited consideration of the accreditation system as a whole. If there is a commitment to a voluntary system, then the task is to find the means of constructing a mandatory introductory phase, or module, which is an integral component of the total process. In other words, the mandatory component should not compromise the integrity of the quality assurance process. The development of a mandated section which will encourage services to continue into the voluntary process is an additional challenge to be met in developing a combination model.

The separation of accreditation into modules and discussion of the criteria for one module in isolation from the process as a whole, has many problems. Alternatively, the accreditation system could be developed as one package. Within this package, certain criteria would need to be met in order to attract funding. Such an approach would maintain the integrity of the total process and would indicate to services that the initial requirements only address basic standards. These basic standards, which should be the right of all children, are provided by many services. Individual services may be more motivated to continue with a system that is presented in this way.

The goal of accreditation is to improve quality. This is particularly critical in poor quality services. A compulsory module needs to include criteria which ensure that poor services do indeed make improvements. There are two key indicators of

program quality. The first indicator relates to the developmental and cultural appropriateness of the curriculum. Obviously, cultural appropriateness is an important factor, given the multicultural composition of the Australian society. In developing this module, criteria relating to these indicators would need to be developed. Given this base line, the criteria which are developed will need to be clearly defined, acceptable to the children's services field, easily assessed and not too prescriptive. Assessment of the mandatory module would need to be undertaken by appropriately trained and qualified individuals.

It should be noted that an introductory mandatory module need not necessarily insist on 100% compliance. The approach developed in South Carolina, which was referred to previously, is based on a weighting system. The highest weighting is allocated to the most essential criteria. It would be possible to design part of the accreditation system that required an agreed upon percentage of compliance. To achieve this percentage, services would need to have reached the standards indicated by the essential criteria.

The selection of the content for a national accreditation system will need to take account of the context of various funding arrangements and the support and advisory services which will be available to centres engaged in the accreditation process. Resource and inservice implications will need to be carefully considered. The process should be one all services can achieve, although some services will require more support and guidance in reaching this goal than others.

WHO SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A NATIONAL ACCREDITATION SYSTEM?

The responsibility for the development and monitoring of an accreditation system for children's services in Australia has various possibilities depending on the ability of the organisation(s) to attract adequate funding.

The Consultative Committee's recommendation that the government establish an independent council to develop and monitor a national approach to accreditation has received wide support. All too frequently, directions in the early childhood field are subject to the vagaries of the current political climate. A national accreditation system set up and monitored by the field has the potential to provide the children's services community with stability and continuity. There is also likely to be more commitment across all sectors of the industry to a system it owns and has had a role in developing.

Future directions for preserving quality in children's services are very volatile. It is part of the process in the development of any new initiatives within a profession, that key issues will emerge and pose many questions. As the children's services field considers issues surrounding the development of a national accreditation system for Australia, various options are open. The profession can choose to feel threatened by what is happening, to ignore what is happening, to be negative and only consider all the difficulties. Alternatively, the children's services field can choose to support the process because of the overall benefits to children, parents and staff and as a profession work through these issues together. To date much of the discussion within the field has focused on the difficulties and not on the benefits of such a process.

A national accreditation system has the potential to address quality in children's services programs across this country in a way that has not been possible before. Without a process like accreditation, what will be the future for our young children who are attending poor quality services? It also has the potential to take us forward as a profession in a way that has not been possible previously. Accreditation, by defining what constitutes good practice in programs for young children and their families, helps develop an expanded definition of our profession. It creates awareness within the community concerning quality issues and assists parents in knowing what to look for in early childhood services.

The potential also exists to provide for the first time, some consistency and stability in children's services. A process developed and monitored by the field is less subject to policy changes. A national accreditation system also has the potential to unify the field - not to further divide the profession. It provides all sectors within the children's services field with an opportunity of working towards ensuring that all young children have access to a good quality service - a common goal that surely is a right for every child in this nation.

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CHAPTER 5

IDEOLOGICAL MANOEUVRING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

David Battersby and Barbara Sparrow

This chapter examines the place of early childhood education in recent education reforms and the appropriate preparation model for rural services. Has early childhood education simply been overlooked by policymakers? Is one preferred model of professional preparation dictated by metropolitan universities appropriate for early childhood services in rural Australia?

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on two issues. Firstly there is now clear evidence that suggestions for the reform of teacher education in Australia have essentially bypassed early childhood teacher education and in so doing have begun to create an ideological manoeuvre. This manoeuvre is most explicit in the nexus that is being manufactured between early childhood, primary and secondary education and in recent advice to government such as the Australian Education Council (AEC) *Working Party Report on Teacher Education*. The lack of recognition given to early childhood teacher education in the AEC report and in other recent blueprints for reform should not be seen merely as an oversight by policy makers, but as a deliberate attempt to promote and by political fiat, to enforce a new common sense view about teacher education in Australia. The second focus of this chapter concerns the preparation of early childhood educators within a rural institution. Courses at regional universities are vulnerable to ideological manoeuvring, particularly by the hegemony of those in metropolitan universitites and institutions who might claim to know what is in the real interests of early childhood educators working in rural Australia, and who would thus seek to establish one preferred model or pattern of early childhood teacher education. This issue is addressed in the conclusion and will draw upon evidence to show a distinctive profile of students undertaking an early childhood program at a rural institution.

OUR FRAMEWORK

The reformation of teacher education in Australia has been influenced by two interrelated perspectives. The first of these is now well articulated (Connell, 1986) and posits the view that the ideology of the 'New Right' has penetrated all the policy agendas within government at the federal level. As Chant and his colleagues (1988:383) point out:

> Under the Hawke administration...the Australian Labor Party...is more concerned with corporatist strategy and the market than with justice and equity...Indeed it is now notorious for selectively pre-empting the economic policies of its 'right-wing' opposition, thus forcing them to more extreme positions on the right.

The ideology of the 'New Right' has impacted significantly on educational policy and decision-making through the tacit endorsement by government of two principles; education is essentially a private undertaking and should therefore be subsidised, if not paid for, by the individual; and secondly, that competition leads to efficiency within the education system and the production of skilled people for the labour market.

Within higher education, the first of these two principles has been the raison d'etre for the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS), while the second principle has led government to condone the establishment of private universities and to create the Unified National System (UNS) of universities and colleges so that greater efficiency and competition can be promoted in the higher education sector. It is quite clear, therefore, that the future direction of educational policy will increasingly reflect the philosophy of the 'New Right'; a philosophy which has already changed the economic infrastructure of Australian society through initiatives such as floating the dollar, deregulation of the banking system and the privatisation of government enterprises and monopolies.

Hand-in-hand with this shift to the 'New Right', has been an insidious ideological manoeuvre through policy discourse. Grace (1990:32) elaborates on one manifestation of this manoeuvre in education:

> An ideological position makes constant use of a particular form of language which it attempts to naturalise in a common sense way. If the language is accepted, taken up and used without question, an important part of that ideological position has already been assimilated. Language is not neutral without a special effort to make it so. The language of inputs, outputs, and production functions in education is being introduced into the discourse of education as an analytically more robust way of thinking about education...

The various documents that seek to provide the blueprints for the reform of teacher education in Australia are not only heavily influenced by the educational thinking of the 'New Right', but are contributing to an ideological manoeuvre that threatens early childhood teacher education[1].

THE REFORM OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER EDUCATION

Over the past two years, the clearest statements concerning the rationalisation, restructuring and reform of teacher education in Australia have come from several sources: Dr Gregor Ramsey, the past Chairman of the National Board of Education, Employment and Training (NBEET), the 1989 Schools Council report on *Teacher Quality*, the 1989 Higher Education Council discussion paper on *Course Length and Nomenclature*, and the 1990 Australian Education Council's (AEC) report of the *Working Party on Teacher Education*. A focus on two of these sources will provide examples for discussion.

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[1] At the time of writing this paper we were not privy to the New South Wales Department of Education proposals for teacher education reform, although an analysis of the current reforms to NSW school education leaves little doubt about the influence of 'New Right' ideology.

1. RAMSEY AND NBEET: Ramsey's view, which has been described as instrumentalist, is that tertiary education should no longer be seen as some interactive whole serving somewhat idealistic ends, but rather as a pragmatic engine of economic development (Dawkins, 1990; Ramsey, 1988, 1990a, 1990b). Indeed, on this issue, Ramsey (1990b:4-5) enunciates most elegantly the philosophy of the 'New Right'.

> It is unlikely that there will be additional funds available at whatever level to bring about desired change unless we can demonstrate that the funds currently being allocated to the system are being used as cost effectively as possible or we can identify new sources of funds which might be obtained to assist in whatever the change is intended to be. As an example, one of the strengths of the current reorganisation in higher education was that the changes were possible within a framework of expanded resources which became available from a new source, namely the students. Irrespective of what your philosophy may be about that decision, it certainly produced and will go on producing significant additional resources for higher education...

In the same address, Ramsey (1990b:10-11) points out that:

> ...the whole of the education industry will be in a better position...if it perceives itself clearly as being an industry. Education shares with industry...lack of resources, **increased competition**...and significant management problems.

Ramsey favours a re-organisation of education into compulsory and post-compulsory sectors. He suggests that the implication of this kind of thinking for teacher education surely "is to question the old teacher preparation categories of early childhood/primary/secondary/TAFE" (Ramsey, 1988:55). In tandem with this type of reorganisation, Ramsey (1988:4) cautions that:

> There is little point in extending the length of any higher education course - but especially a course that is devoted to vocational or professional training - unless there is a planned process of integrating both institutional and work environment learning within that course.

Once the "old categories" of teacher preparation are erased, "work environment learning" assumes a new meaning which fits with Ramsey's views about broadening the "labour market skills of teachers". As Ramsey (1988:3) says:

> How many teachers, for example, are aware of the resources required to run their classrooms...No other industry would be as cavalier, or at least as unknowing, about the use of resources as is the education industry...

What is not well understood is that acquisition of these skills is likely to involve "work environment learning" **beyond** the education industry so that "participants can develop levels of competence which is [sic] recognised not only in local labour markets but industrially and educationally" (Ramsey, 1990a:3). These sentiments

are also echoed in the Review of Teacher Education in Mathematics and Science which, as Ramsey admits, provided an "important base for the [Australian Education Council's] working party's deliberations".

What Ramsey seems to be advocating then, is a restructured teacher education industry which dispenses with the old categories of teacher preparation (such as early childhood, primary), where students will continue to fund their own training, where there will be real competition in the industry, and most importantly, where extension of course length will occur through "work environment learning". At the micro-level it is possible to see how these principles are beginning to be shaped as a "solid framework for reform" (Dawkins, 1990:6). The AEC report is a significant starting point for it very cleverly continues the process of dismantling the old categories of teacher preparation, it encapsulates some of the ideological manoeuvrings of the 'New Right' and, for early childhood teacher educators, it uses a particular form of discourse which seeks to annul any legitimate claim the field may have towards strengthening and consolidating itself.

2. AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION COUNCIL (AEC): What is often lost sight of in analyses of the AEC's report of the *Working Party on Teacher Education* are its historical antecedents. Its origins can be traced to what is now popularly known as the 'Hobart Declaration on Schooling'. Dawkins (1990:3-4) elaborates on this:

> In May, 1988, I issued the statement *Strengthening Australia's Schools*, which set out for the first time a truly national education agenda. In July 1988, following its release a special meeting of education ministers was convened. Lengthy discussions ensued at a number of subsequent meetings of the Australian Education Council resulting in significant progress towards a more **common system of schooling** across the states...The Hobart Declaration on Schooling features:
>
> - ten national goals for Australia's schools;
> - provides a framework for co-operative curriculum development (in schools);
> - sets out ways to minimise difficulties faced by (school) students moving interstate;
> - pledges to develop strategies to improve and strengthen teacher education in order to help teachers meet the challenges of schooling in the future.

Dawkins, like Ramsey, conceptualises teacher education only in terms of the compulsory sector and therefore uses the discourse appropriate to this, as highlighted above. Thus it is not coincidental that the AEC working party on teacher education adopted and extended this discourse and used it as an ideological manoeuvre.

The AEC working party begins its report with the statement: "There is no one best way to prepare teachers". It then proposes a preferred teacher education model which, it avers, will overcome the rigidities of present practices and will lead the

way forward. On the one hand, this is a brave prediction, if in fact we are to believe there is no one best system. On the other hand, its notion of a preferred model reinforces the possibility of developing teacher preparation programs that coincide with the reorganisation of the Australian education system into what Ramsey refers to as the "compulsory sector".

The AEC model of teacher education involves a two-stage process. First, there is proposed to be a three year, seven semester program to develop the students' general education in areas as diverse as language and science, mathematics and expressive arts and sociology and health education. Also to be included in the program are those essentials (eg. study of schools curriculum) that enable a person to be appointed as a sound beginning practitioner. The preferred nomenclature for the award is Bachelor of Arts (Teaching) with the possibility for Honours after an additional year of study.

The second stage also involves a degree program but in tandem with a period of professional experience. The BA (Teaching) graduate would be expected to take up an appointment as an associate teacher (that is, an intern) for a period of two years. During this time, salary and related benefits would be paid proportional to the teaching load carried. Supervision would be undertaken by an experienced teacher designated with specific responsibilities for teacher development.

Over the two years, the neophyte teacher would also pursue studies for a second degree. These studies would provide "for deeper and more analytical reading into the mainstream educational studies - educational psychology, educational measurement and assessment, contemporary issues in educational thought and practice" (AEC, 1990a:30). Study for the degree would be part-time, either on-campus or externally. Success as an associate (however determined) and with academic studies would culminate in the award of a post-graduate Bachelor of Education degree. Only after completing both academic degrees and the associateship would a person be granted unconditional recognition as a teacher (that is, registration occurs).

What, then, is the community of early childhood educators to make of the AEC report, keeping in mind the previous discussion?

Firstly, the report partially meets what Ramsey advocates by dispensing with the old categories of teacher preparation (early childhood/primary), and arguing for extension of course length through a form of "work environment learning". However the report fails to acknowledge recent movements within the early childhood field to better address its own nomenclature relating to child care workers and directors.

Secondly, deliberate attempts are made in the report to manufacture a nexus between early childhood and primary teacher education and to blur the boundaries

between primary and secondary teacher education. The likely implication of this could be to eliminate diversity within various teacher education courses in general and within early childhood courses more specifically.

Thirdly, little analysis, if any, is made of the differences in the workforce profile of those employed in the early childhood education field compared with those employed in other education sectors. And yet, there are significant differences reflected in the supply and demand of early childhood educators, in the industrial awards governing their employment and in the diversity of workplaces in which they are employed.

The fourth point is that, for those working in early childhood education, the discourse of the AEC report is as alienating as the Hobart Declaration on Schooling. This is evident in the repeated references to schools and school systems and the fact that it ignores underlying philosophical and theoretical bases of early childhood educational practice which are considered to be distinctive.

At first glance, these observations to some early childhood teacher educators may simply be interpreted as oversights of the AEC working party. However, the working party did nothing to correct such 'oversights' in their *Supplementary Report*. Indeed, it exacerbates the problem by almost completely ignoring, once again, early childhood teacher education regardless of the many deputations made by early childhood educators. For instance, much of the *Supplementary Report* (1990b:8) still uses the discourse associated with schools:

> ...the preservice course should therefore contain such specific components related to teaching as will enable the graduate to enter a school on a provisional basis (and) to manage...classes of students.

What does this lack of recognition of the importance of early childhood teacher education demonstrate? It reinforces the belief that early childhood teacher education in Australia continues to be perceived as the least powerful and the most insignificant sector of the teacher education system. It appears to signal the demise of the territorial rights for the training of those who work with young children. Several years ago Brennan and O'Donnell (1986) pointed out that the claiming of this territory was fraught with "hostility and ridicule from various quarters" and by the common perception that working with young children is something that "any woman can do". In addition to this, the difficulties of defending a philosophical and ideological position have come to be a trademark for early childhood teacher education in Australia.

> ...training courses which prepare students to work with children aged 0-8 years (the broad definition of 'early childhood education') should be separate from programs which train teachers to work with older children within formal schooling systems... (Brennan and O'Donnell, 1986:96)

What, then, are the implications of the preceding analysis? These can be listed as a series of statements worthy of further debate.

1. The dominant influences in the reform of teacher education in Australia have specific ideological and political agendas.
2. There is evidence to indicate that early childhood teacher education has been abandoned in considerations and debate about reform and that this is not unintentional.
3. The solutions to the problems that now beset the early childhood field do not reside in consensus being sought on the preferred pattern of early childhood teacher education or what the core components of a program should or might be. Such practical strategies simply disguise the necessity for effective, political action by early childhood educators.
4. If the field does not act swiftly to politicise the plight of early childhood teacher education, then it can be guaranteed that the decisions ultimately made in the reform of teacher education in Australia will not be in its best interest.

PREPARATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS IN RURAL SETTINGS

A number of early childhood teacher education programs have been developed in rural institutions to service rural communities as well as other community types. It has been argued elsewhere (Battersby et al. 1989) that metropolitan predispositions have heavily influenced policy and practice in early childhood education in Australia. Accordingly, in the apparent haste for reform, it is all too easy to neglect not only the socio-economic and ethnic contrasts of the communities which are served by institutions providing early childhood teacher education programs, but also the rural and/or metropolitan characteristics of these communities.

To illustrate this point, systematic data gathered from early childhood students (1988-1990, Charles Sturt University - Riverina, Wagga Wagga, NSW) has revealed that three in every four students are from the local region and that those who enrol from outside the local area are not usually from the major metropolitan centres such as Sydney or Newcastle. Surveys have revealed that students choose to study at this institution either because it is close to their homes or through the word-of-mouth recommendations of friends or relatives.

Almost without exception, early childhood students at this institution have had some type of working experience with children whom they most want to work in the future. Again these experiences have been predominantly in rural settings. Approximately fifty per cent of students express an interest in working with children up to four years of age, while the remainder are mainly interested in

teaching at the kindergarten to year two level. In light of such demographic characteristics and in view of the fact that most of these students initially seek employment within the local region, it could well be argued that this early childhood program should not only be philosophically different to those institutions that have a different mix of students, but that it should seek to preserve these differences. Thus, an important emphasis of a course like this could well be "to foster in all students the development of the ability to provide meaningful learning experiences for children living in rural communities" and for them to be able to "analyse family and community issues which influence children's services in rural Australia".

CONCLUSION

Far greater attention should be given to the now infamous AEC cliche that, "there is no one best way to prepare teachers". Indeed, if we are not cautious, our deliberations about reform in early childhood teacher education may lead to the recommendation that all programs should have a sameness. Goodlad and his associates (1990a, 1990b) from the University of Washington in Seattle, are quick to remind us that teacher education across the United States is characterised by a sameness which is borne of an uncritical approach to program development and change. Our challenge is to be critical, as well as political, about the reform of early childhood teacher education in Australia.

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CHAPTER 6

CHALLENGING CHANGES IN CHILD CARE TRAINING

Judith Bissland

National policy in relation to industry training reforms is radically changing the structure of TAFE courses and the decision-making environment in which they are constructed and delivered. The fact that child care training has primarily been assigned to TAFE means that it is exposed to a range of innovations and changes. This chapter explores the opportunities and threats facing child care training as a consequence of major new TAFE policy directions.

Technical and Further Education (TAFE) is the major provider of courses preparing people for employment in child care centres. At a meeting of the National Association of TAFE Child Care Studies Teachers (September, 1991) it emerged that in 1991, approximately 2,500 students will graduate with Associate Diplomas or Advanced Certificates in child care from Australian TAFE colleges. While kindergarten, infant and primary teachers have been undertaking diplomas and degrees at tertiary colleges and universities, most child care workers have been gaining TAFE qualifications. It is interesting to speculate on why this has occurred and whether it suggests that a 'poor cousin' or 'second rate' status has been accorded both child care and TAFE.

Whatever may be the case, the fact that prime responsibility for child care training has been taken by the TAFE sector has significantly affected the nature of what is offered. This chapter will explore some of the existing and emerging features of TAFE which are shaping the nature of child care training. While this chapter has been written primarily from a Victorian perspective, the experiences of TAFE in Victoria are illustrative of how national policy in relation to industry training reforms is radically changing the structure of TAFE courses and the decision-making environment in which they are constructed and delivered.

Although child care courses have been offered by the TAFE sector since 1973, it is nonetheless the case that child care and other social and community services (SACS) courses are still relative newcomers to the TAFE scene. TAFE's origins lie in the trade area, in courses providing groups such as plumbers, carpenters and bakers, with specific, measurable vocational skills. TAFE's emphasis on trade courses and the evolution of curriculum models particularly suited to the development and presentation of such courses poses some interesting challenges for those involved with child care and other SACS courses. As is the case with most challenges, there are both opportunities and threats: opportunities to explore alternatives to traditional models for education and training; threats of having concepts arising from trade areas being imposed on human services courses regardless of their appropriateness.

INDUSTRY DRIVEN

A central concept underpinning TAFE is that it is a training system which is 'industry driven' and thus will provide courses that will closely match the immediate and emerging needs of an industry. In other words, the intent is to have TAFE's feet planted well and truly in the firm reality of daily workplace needs; no lofty ivory tower here!

This characteristic is clearly one of TAFE's great strengths. Field or industry advisory committees have for many years been part of TAFE's tradition, with the aim of ensuring that the courses provided do not stray from equipping future workers with needed workplace skills. In the last few years, however, a fundamental shift has been occurring with respect to the composition and functioning of such industry advisory groups.

Victoria provides a useful model for understanding how the system is intended to work. After a major restructuring in 1988, the State Training Board was established as the central bureaucracy to administer the Victorian TAFE system. It abolished all existing advisory committees and replaced them with 19 autonomous Industry Training Boards (ITBs), each of which is regarded as the authoritative voice of the nominated industry. These ITBs have significantly more power, influence and independence than the previous advisory groups had.

The Social and Community Services Industry Training Board (SACS ITB) has its own staffing and funding allocation; it provides direction to the State Training Board on a broad range of aspects relating to training needs in child care and other SACS areas, including issues such as what courses should be developed, what changes should be made to existing courses and where courses should be located.

The membership of the ITB is drawn exclusively from unions, employer groups and relevant government bodies. This is a very big shift from the situation some years ago, when advisory committees usually included several college representatives, nominees of various professional associations and a number of field personnel handpicked by college staff.

There are a number of important advantages to the new system.

- ITB membership is both accountable and influential, representing the actual industrial and governmental bodies affecting the shape of the workforce;
- colleges are required to listen to what the various 'players' in industry are saying, rather than just consulting with a selected number of 'friendly' field personnel.

Inevitably, the new system also has potential disadvantages:

- Professional organisations and peak bodies such as the Australian Early Childhood Association may be excluded from the ITBs, as is the case in Victoria, creating the possibility that exclusively utilitarian views focussing only on political or economic agendas may dominate and that quality training programs and service provision may be lower down on the agenda;
- many of the officials sitting around the table determining training needs have never actually worked in the field, and although responsible for or accountable to those who do, they lack direct field knowledge and expertise.

One example may highlight the sort of concerns that can arise. Victoria is currently phasing in long overdue and hard fought for Children's Services Regulations requiring all child care centres to employ a proportion of qualified staff. Approximately 50% of Victoria's child care centres are run as private businesses, and historically, the majority of these centres have not employed qualified staff.

A current report by the SACS ITB notes that in recent consultations with industry "some parties have proposed that workers ought to be able to apply to have their years of experience recognised as equivalent to a qualification" (Burston, 1991:22). Later in this chapter, issues relating to the recognition of skills acquired though work experience will be discussed more fully. While recognition of prior learning is an important and overdue response to industry needs, the wholesale granting of qualifications mooted in the above comment simultaneously undermines the meaning of being qualified and the intent of Victoria's Children's Services Centres Regulations. The SACS ITB's discussion paper makes it clear that the proposal is "counter to the positions of many other parties consulted" (Burston, 1991:22) and given the thoughtful, consultative approach taken by the ITB to date, there is reason to feel optimistic that any recommendations ultimately made will be appropriate ones. It is, however, a good example of the fact that being 'industry driven' creates the danger that training needs may be determined by financial or political imperatives rather than by issues relating to skills and knowledge required for provision of a quality service.

Having sounded this warning, two further points should be made. The first is that in Victoria, the establishment of the SACS ITB has thus far had an extremely positive effect on SACS courses in general and child care courses in particular. The tripartite employer/union/government membership of the ITB has provided considerable political clout and enabled the SACS ITB to considerably heighten the profile of SACS courses in Victoria and advocate for increased budget allocations. The second point is that although the particular proposal of granting automatic qualifications to untrained child care workers needs to be resisted, the importance of working more closely with and responding more fully to all of industry's training needs, including those of the private child care sector, has been addressed by the new structures. The TAFE system is now required to listen to industry voices much more carefully and positive training options for a variety of situations and needs are much more likely to be achieved through the new 'industry driven' structures than they were previously.

COMPETENCY BASED TRAINING

Federal and State governments have been making major changes to both education and training and to industrial awards, with the aim of increasing the skill levels of

Australia's workforce and thereby improving economic performance and international competitiveness. Industrial awards are being restructured so they relate to skill levels, which means that competency standards must be specified to identify the different skill levels within an industry. The government's plan is that several benefits will flow from the establishment of clear skill levels and competency standards. Firstly, it will become possible to recognise and reward those who possess skills but have previously been barred from access to career advancement either because they lacked formal qualifications or because they held unrecognised overseas qualification. Secondly, and of major significance for TAFE, is the opportunity of focussing training very specifically on the competencies required by industry.

Competency based training is not a new concept in TAFE, but it has recently been given increased emphasis and significance because of these developments. The thrust of TAFE training for some years has been to move course content out of the hands of academics and base it on the needs of the workplace, however the procedure and processes for relating courses to industry needs are now being much more clearly prescribed and formalised. Instead of a group of educators drafting a list of topics to be covered or theory to be explored, as might occur in other educational sectors, the starting point is to have industry "determine what competencies are required and at what level for a particular occupation or industry sector" (Burston, 1991:3).

The National Training Board's document, *National Competency Standards: Policy and Guidelines*, defines a competency as "comprising the specification of knowledge and skill and the application of that knowledge and skill within an occupation... to the standard of performance required in employment" (1991:18). A competency can be broken up into smaller elements which "describe in *output* terms things that an employee who works in a particular area is able to do" (National Training Board, 1991:19, italics added). Guidelines regarding how competencies will be described have been provided by the National Training Board, which provides the following example of what a unit of competency looks like in relation to driving a crane.

Occupation: Crane Driver **Unit: Drive crane**	
Element Obtain permits	**Performance Criteria** Permits obtained if required to allow transportation of crane to site.
Element Drive Crane to nominated site.	**Performance Criteria** Hazards, including overhead obstructions, poles adjacent to roadways and corners recognised and braking carried out to ensure smooth and safe transportation of crane.

(National Training Board, 1991:23)

The question that must be asked is in how well such a model fits areas such as child care? It is certainly true that designing vocational courses around clearly specified competencies identified by the relevant industry has much value and should avoid "dissatisfaction with the distance between the curricula and the reality of the workplace, achieve(ing) a better match between the requirements of the world of work and the learning that takes place in training and education institutions" (Burston 1991:2). However as is fairly evident from the above descriptions and example, the competency based approach stemmed originally from trade industries, where objective and measurable 'outputs' or outcomes can be easily identified and compartmentalised. A number of problems arise when applying this model to areas such as child care. There are dangers that the theoretical, human and attitudinal components required will be left out, or so reduced as to be trivial, because they cannot easily be measured or described in terms of demonstrable or observable outcomes.

In a major critique of competency based training, Jackson (1991:11) notes that such training leads to courses which focus on aspects which are observable and easily demonstrated and assessed and to an "emphasis on unimportant, routine, even 'trivial' aspects of the learning process". The SACS ITB's discussion paper, *Policy on Competency in the SACS Industry*, raises a number important issues about the effect this approach may have on child care and other SACS courses, noting that:

- an emphasis on outcomes as tangible phenomenon is very problematic for SACS;
- the lack of concern with thinking processes in some definitions of competency is also likely to be unacceptable to SACS;
- competency-based thinking denies the ideological, value and political dimensions of SACS work;
- SACS skills are too complex and dynamic to be reduced to a mechanical list of functions or behaviours... It is not possible to isolate fragments of a course, and label them specific competencies, which may be acquired in intermittent steps ... The way human beings learn is not like the way a slot machine operates. The worker of the twenty first century is one who is able to integrate, problem-solve, diagnose, innovate and be flexible. A teaching process based on fragmentation may be essentially counter to what have been widely identified as the desirable outcomes for the worker of the future. (Burston, 1991:7, 20).

The solution proposed by the SACS ITB is to significantly broaden the definition of competence to ensure that it can encompass the complexity of work in SACS areas such as child care. It remains to be seen whether their proposed definitions and other broader approaches to competency will enable child care courses to be constructed in a meaningful way.

SELF-PACED LEARNING

Many trade courses have been using self-paced learning programs for some years. Students arrive at the college and work through kits of instructional materials such as print packages, videos and computer based packages. If they need assistance, they call upon the teacher or facilitator present in the room. When they are ready to be assessed, they again call upon the teacher, who evaluates whether they have achieved the specified learning outcomes for the module.

There are several benefits to this form of education. Able students can progress through the course fairly swiftly, saving time and boredom. Students with a slower learning pace can take more time without being classed a failure. Perhaps even more importantly, the use of self-paced packages enables prospective learners to start studying when they are ready to; they don't have to wait until another year for the next intake.

The Victorian State Training Board's discussion paper on *The development of a curriculum policy* repeatedly emphasises the importance of curriculum which incorporates "a flexible approach to learning, which should take place at a time, in a format, and at a level, which is most appropriate to the learner's needs" (1991a:10) and self-paced programs certainly fulfil this criterion of flexibility.

Self-paced learning also has drawbacks, some of which are generic and some which arise specifically when considering the suitability of self-paced learning for areas such as child care. One issue relates to the effectiveness and attractiveness of the learning experience. It may be possible to teach students about, say, storytelling through print and video packages, but is it as enjoyable and effective as a live in-class demonstration, followed by the chance to practise story-telling skill in small groups within the class? Often it is the feeling of being part of a group and/or the personality and presentation skills of the teacher, which supports students' learning and provides incentive to continue.

In a similar vein, considerable ability and initiative will be required from students working through self-paced packages to come to grips with theorists such as Piaget and Erikson without the amplifying comments and examples of a classroom facilitator, but providing similar explanations to individual students is not particularly efficient, and there will be limitations on how much teacher time any one student can have access to.

Another concern noted in a discussion by the SACS ITB is that the "delivery of SACS courses depends on the operations of the student group's dynamics" (Burston, 1991:20). Being part of a group, learning about the different backgrounds, cultures and values of others, are important components of SACS courses. While it does not seem unreasonable to learn about horticulture or

carpentry by working on one's own through self-paced modules, the appropriateness of this model for the mainstream provision of child care courses and other courses centring on human interaction requires close examination.

In a few years, it will be possible to make such an assessment, as Tea Tree Gully College of TAFE in South Australia is implementing the Advanced Certificate in Child Care in a self-paced format in 1992. In the meantime, it would appear that while self-paced learning is an important supplement to more traditional teaching, giving much greater flexibility and control to students, it would appear to be inappropriate to replace the majority of child care courses will self-paced programs. Ideally, the TAFE system might be able to make both options available to learners. Some colleges, such as Tea Tree Gully, may specialise in self-paced programs. Most other colleges may maintain the more traditional approach of using group lectures and tutorials, but develop means of supplementing these with some open learning packages, to give students greater flexibility.

EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS

Traditionally, people who have undertaken studies in one course have been able to apply for credit or advanced standing for some subjects upon entering a related course. The direction of TAFE policy has been to replace such individually negotiated, ad hoc arrangements, with credit transfer or articulation arrangements which are specified when the course is designed. Recently issued guidelines for accreditation of Victorian TAFE courses make this expectation clear:

> Vocational education and training courses submitted for accreditation must provide information on the relationship of the course to other courses (ie, how it articulates) and arrangements for credit transfer should be identified.
>
> (State Training Board, 1991b:4)

It is expected that courses submitted for accreditation will detail linkages between the proposed course, relevant TAFE courses, and courses in other educational sectors. It is already the case in Victoria and most other States that Child Care Associate Diploma graduates receive credit ranging between one and two years of study when entering higher education diplomas and degrees in early childhood and children's services. Transfer arrangements from one SACS TAFE course to another are increasingly being identified, as are credit arrangements for students who have completed vocationally specific studies in their final years of secondary school.

There are several good reasons for ensuring that articulation arrangements are specified and the government's goals appear to be threefold. Firstly, articulation creates study pathways between courses, thus serving as an encouragement for

learners to continue in education and upgrade their knowledge and skills. Secondly, articulation saves time, producing graduates more quickly. Last but not least, articulation may save the government's money, avoiding duplication of the training effort.

Up until relatively recently, a combination of academic snobbery and lack of co-ordination often meant that articulation arrangements were neither very fair nor very uniform and the increasing acceptance of the need for effective articulation arrangements across educational sectors is welcome. The one caution that should be made is that care will need to be taken to ensure that the enthusiasm for articulation does not sweep aside important differences relating to course standard, level and depth. For instance, the fact that a unit of study in a traineeship or basic introductory course covers similar topics to subjects in an Associate Diploma or Diploma does not automatically establish that it will be appropriate to grant credit for this unit. Factors that need to be considered include the entry level skills of the students and the standard and depth of coverage of the course undertaken. So long as these factors are given careful consideration and not subjected to political pressure, the establishment of clearly defined articulation pathways between courses is a great advance.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

The concept of granting advanced standing for studies previously undertaken is not new, although the TAFE commitment to requiring articulation arrangements to be specified in course proposals is relatively recent. What is much more revolutionary is moving beyond the concept of granting credit or advanced standing for previous studies and extending it to granting credit for the knowledge and skills incoming students have acquired from a range of sources including work experience and life experience. Many unqualified personnel who have extensive field experience will be heartened to learn of the moves TAFE is making with respect to the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), which has been defined and explained as follows in a report by Broadmeadows College of TAFE (1990:15).

> RPL is the acknowledgement of skills and knowledge obtained through:
>
> - formal training (conducted by industry or education)
> - work experience (including informal training)
> - life experience.
>
> The main focus of RPL is the learning outcomes of these experiences, not how, when or where the learning occurred. This is a crucial underlying principle of

> RPL - it makes the distinction between formal and informal training unnecessary, by focussing on outcomes rather than location of learning.
>
> The purpose of RPL is to identify and assess the accumulated learning experiences of an individual in relation to clearly defined vocational outcomes. In the case of education or training these would be the course outcomes defined by the curriculum.

A person, such as an unqualified child care worker, can approach a TAFE college seeking to be credited with having achieved the outcomes of certain components of the course. Broadmeadows College of TAFE has outlined a process which involves having the applicant complete a form in which they relate their experience to specific course outcomes, then they attend an interview at which they and an industry 'mentor' provide information relating to the achievement of these outcomes. On the basis of this interview, the decision may be made to grant RPL for certain course components, to refuse the granting of RPL, or to enter a review phase where there will be further assessment.

There are three major reasons why RPL is gaining such momentum in the TAFE system. Firstly, the individual applicant, who gains exemptions, benefits by being able to complete a qualification in less time and with less boredom. The importance of saving time can be appreciated when one considers the fairly typical example of an unqualified child care worker, facing 4 years of part-time study in order to gain an Associate Diploma level qualification. Anything which shortens the time-span or lightens the study load will be a great boon. Secondly, industry also stands to benefit from RPL. Having employees undertake part-time study may disrupt service provision and may cost money; every RPL exemption granted alleviates these problems. If an industry is required to employ a certain number of qualified staff, granting maximum amounts of RPL will be perceived as a major benefit, as it will enable industry to more quickly fulfil regulatory requirements. Thirdly, when RPL is combined with a self-paced learning approach, there may be a systemwide benefit, for if enough RPL is granted it is possible that more students will be able to gain access to TAFE training without any further government expenditure. Such cost savings are only likely to arise when self-paced packages are used, however, for when traditional lectures and tutorials are used the class still runs, but with slightly fewer students.

Although the benefits of RPL are enticing, there are a number of unresolved issues relating to its implementation. The first is a very practical one; the processes relating to granting RPL, if done thoroughly, are very time-consuming ones. Some pilot efforts undertaken with respect to child care students have indicated that a single RPL application relating to gaining recognition for approximately 10% of a course may involve 10-12 hours of teacher time. The student gaining RPL may gain considerably, but correspondingly a group of 20 or more students who could have been receiving 12 hours of teaching while the one RPL application was being

conducted many have lost out. In other words, if teachers are given reduced teaching loads to compensate for involvement in RPL procedures, the process will end up costing the government money, rather than saving any.

If teachers are not given a time allocation for involvement with RPL, then either the RPL interview won't occur through lack of time, or the RPL process will have a profoundly negative impact on the teachers themselves or the quality of their teaching.

There are a number of educational concerns as well as practical ones with respect to RPL. Firstly, a person may have achieved specified vocational outcomes, but many nonetheless have found it very enhancing to have undertaken the unit of study; the granting of an exemption may effectively prevent them from gaining other perspectives, deepening their insight and becoming a better worker. Secondly the process of granting RPL credit for some course components may act against the likelihood of a student being able to synthesise ideas developed in separate course components into an integrated framework; it may cause fragmentation and inhibit the formation of a coherent, holistic overview. Thirdly, there is the danger that mistakes made in granting RPL may lower the quality of graduates. In an RPL interview of 1 - 2 hours, teachers will be making decisions regarding whether to grant recognition for vocational outcomes relating to units of study normally comprising 30 - 90 hours of work. The possibility for erroneously granting RPL exists. Finally, there is the danger that unless excellent monitoring systems are put in place, the government's recent encouragement of private organisations moving into offering TAFE courses could lead to widespread unethical granting of RPL.

There are, then, a number of practical and educational issues to be resolved with respect to the granting of RPL. Pilot programs being undertaken at Noarlunga TAFE (SA) and Broadmeadows TAFE (Vic) may give more understanding of implementation issues affecting the application of RPL to the child care field.

CONCLUSION

Significant changes are occurring at a fairly swift pace in TAFE and sometimes there is not much time for analysis, nor much tolerance for alternative views.

Recently in Victoria, the State Training Board issued a set of nine principles, in line with national policies, which constitute guidelines for the accreditation of TAFE courses (State Training Board, 1991b). Some of the principles specified include industry involvement in course development, competency based training, articulation, flexible delivery and maximum participation achieved in part through

recognition of prior learning. In other words, issues discussed in this chapter as having major ramifications and in some cases, as requiring further thought and investigation with respect to their applicability to SACS courses, have already been set as requirements.

The thrust in TAFE is to provide pragmatic, cost efficient, time efficient training that is closely attuned to industry's needs. Another major aim is to increase the accessibility of the training provided through a range of strategies including self paced programs and distance education. The fact that child care training has been primarily taken up by TAFE means that it is exposed to a range of innovations and fresh winds of change, many of which may benefit the child care field. The danger is that in ridding vocational training of any academic preciousness, the baby may indeed be thrown out with the bathwater!

It is interesting to speculate on how different the directions in child care training might be if it had primarily been taken up by universities and other tertiary institutions. TAFE is a centralised system with nationwide policy directions and this sometimes means that when a bandwagon of ideas starts to roll, it turns into a positive stampede, riding roughshod over area that may require a different approach to the mainstream thrust. The challenge with respect to child care training is to draw on innovative ideas whilst preserving course integrity, and to ensure that the consequences of increasing the flexibility, accessibility and quantity of training does not lead to a reduction in quality.

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CHAPTER 7

RESEARCH IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: ESSENTIAL FOR THE PROFESSION

Marjory Ebbeck

The key issues raised in this chapter relate to the status of early childhood education and the need for research in order to improve and upgrade the profession. Other issues raised include the need to demystify research, identifying potential research areas and some practical pointers on conducting research.

INTRODUCTION

There is a pressing need for the research base of early childhood in Australia to accrue further. This is because for many years professionals working in the early childhood field in Australia have been reliant on research from the United States of America and the United Kingdom, as there was and still is to a large extent, a dearth of Australian research. Whilst it is important to learn from, use and where appropriate replicate overseas research, there is still a need to generate original research which has a strong application for the Australian early childhood profession.

As professionals, we continue to ask ourselves, what is the purpose of research? One constant response is to improve our practice and to reduce inconsistencies between intention and reality. Therefore, we need to research our own local efforts identifying strengths and weaknesses, analysing these in keeping with our intentions and leading to needed redirections.

It is interesting and indeed legitimate to note that although there are valued diversities in early childhood education throughout the states of Australia, there are also some commonalities. There are other significant differences in early childhood education in overseas countries as well. Hence, again, my plea to value and improve our practices and disseminate Australian research findings. It is sound commonsense to expect that professionals who initiate research and disseminate its findings are in a good position to perceive and influence needed changes. Another pressing reason for generating Australian research data is to influence those early childhood policy makers who are often in positions through policy mandates, to influence future research directions.

The issue of what constitutes research in early childhood needs consideration. Here the debate is likely to be heated. Clark (1981:1) defines research as a study "to collect and analyse facts and information and to try to gain new knowledge or new understanding". Some early childhood research can be categorised as social science research. Current discussion about the superiority and indeed validity of pure scientific research as contrasted with social science research is unlikely ever to be resolved. However, it can be stated that research in early childhood, if conducted scrupulously, can be as valid and as important for the future development of services as is the 'pure science' research work and still meet the definition of Clark.

WHY CONDUCT RESEARCH?

Zimiles (1986:197), in writing on the role of research in early childhood education, mentioned the "formidable methodological barriers to thorough and valid assessment of the impact of pre-school experience". Zimiles quotes from Clark-Stewart and Fein (1983):

> Flaws in design and the idiosyncrasies of measuring preschool behaviour produce biases in the data that are now well known.

So to conduct research in early childhood education is not easy and is indeed a daunting task, but one which must not be shirked. It must be soundly thought out, incorporating designed data gathering techniques appropriate to the research topic and not just of 'survey' type which seems to be so typical of much of the existing research in early childhood.

We know that research contributes greatly to professional practice, not only by bridging the gap between theory and practice, as it were, but also by enabling theory to maintain relevance. Research must be understood and valued by the profession if it is to influence the theory-practice continuum essential to professional development. Engagement in research tests one's commitment to the improvement of practice and it should raise awareness and interest in instigating needed changes in the profession.

Every profession must have a basis of theory and practice which is continually improved and updated as a result of continuing, relevant research findings. Where research is conducted by the profession it is likely that the findings will be specific to early childhood development. It is of questionable value to extrapolate research findings from other professions if such findings are not directly relevant to early childhood practice. This is not meant to denigrate other research, particularly multi-disciplinary research, but rather to stress the need to utilize it competently, particularly as at times, such research can lead to interesting new elements or pathways to be investigated by the early childhood professional.

Another reason for needing early childhood education research relates to the status of the profession. Whether we like it or not, it has been written in many arenas that early childhood education is accorded lower status than that given to some other areas of education (Ebbeck and Clyde, 1988). The reasons for the lower status are complex and include the historical fact that, in the past, people who worked in early childhood education had qualifications of a lower status than those of other teachers. Other existing reasons include the general community misunderstanding of the early childhood field in relation to the qualification differences between trained and untrained staff. Allied to this is the diversity and range of qualifications acceptable in child care. This has added to community confusion especially in recent years when integrated centres which have a mix of preschool

and child care services, have come into existence necessitating a comparable mix of staff expertise.

Whilst not solving the above problems, a sound research base which is developed from research from all sectors of the profession - child care, preschool and junior primary school - will help to clarify confusions and legitimise the early childhood profession in its own right.

THE NEED TO DEMYSTIFY RESEARCH

It is quite accurate to write that many early childhood professionals do not perceive themselves as researchers. Almy (1986) went to some length to rationalise why early childhood practitioners were less professional than their counterparts in other similar professions. She believed the number of tasks they were called upon to perform detracted from any single-minded pursuit of professional excellence. With regard to research Almy (1986:7) said:

> Early childhood practitioners whether in public schools or in day care centres, for reasons that should be clear from my discussion on diversity, have little, if any, time to involve themselves in research. Furthermore, few of them believe that research has any relevance for them. The attitudes which early childhood staff have towards research are not unique; rather they reflect a commonly held view of social science research.

The situation is unfortunate, for even if early childhood practitioners do not perceive themselves as researchers, they still have a responsibility to be aware of and to understand current research and its implications for their work. It is difficult to understand research without being a 'researcher', in some form or other. The Stenhouse (1975) model of teacher as researcher challenges professionals who work at the grass roots level to identify and research the problems which beset their profession. Indeed, who has a better understanding of the problems than those who have first hand contact?

Likewise, an article by Sparks-Langer, Simmons, Pasch, Cotton and Starks (1990:23) comments on the need for observations and critiques of teaching:

> Clearly, professional inquiry is worth the time and effort. Our research into the development of reflection has helped us refine our own thinking and, thus, our entire program. We are certainly not confident that we have found the only or even the best definition of reflection. We do know, however, that this research path has led us to a specific vision that allows us to make practical, and reasonable improvements in our programs.

This statement shows very clearly that inquiry into practice is well worth the effort and can point the way for future re-directions. And yet it is equally important to appreciate that a better understanding of problems can be gained when the workers have the opportunity to stand back and analyse the situation from a distance and with dispassion.

Lack of time is a reason frequently given by early childhood staff for non-involvement in research. It is agreed that early childhood professionals have demanding, time-consuming jobs, and time is a most precious resource: it is also very easy to become side-tracked with a myriad of issues. As a consequence professionals interested in researching need to establish priorities as to their time and tasks and be rigourous in adhering to these.

Walker (1985:187) quotes from Beasley and Riordan (1981), who also believe that teachers are in a good position to initiate research because such research could:

- begin with, and build on, the knowledge teachers had already accumulated through experience.
- focus on the immediate interests and concerns of classroom teachers.
- better match the subtle organic processes of classroom life.
- build on the 'natural' processes of evaluation and research which teachers carry out daily.
- bridge the gap between understanding and action by merging the role of the researcher and practitioner

Beasley and Riordan (1991:36) further propose that research in classrooms can:

- sharpen teachers' critical awareness through observation, recording and analysis of classroom events. It could be a consciousness-raising exercise.
- provide teachers with better information than they already have about what is actually happening in the classroom and why.
- help teachers better articulate teaching and learning processes to their colleagues and interested community members.
- bridge the gap between theoretic research and practice-based research. Teacher-researchers, Don Graves said, "become consumers and critics of research literature".

The ethics of research must also be accounted for before embarking on any research, be it with children, parents or colleagues.

> However small the research project in which you take part, it is crucial that you ensure first that you obtain permission from all the relevant people (including,

> of course, the parents of any children you study in detail) and that on completion of the research you send a short, concise report, prepared for them, on the findings to those in the schools and areas you have worked. You may wish to offer to talk further to anyone interested. (Clark, 1989:113)

The responsibility of disseminating the research findings is an important one and is sometimes overlooked by busy professionals. However, the dissemination of research to professionals who have been part of studies can be one of the most effective and powerful inservice education tools. Teachers who participate in studies are usually interested in the results, hence the opportunity for valuable inservice. Direct involvement in or with a research study may invoke an attitudinal change in professionals. One must accept the proposition that beginning researchers need advice and assistance, and the best advice is that there is a need to demystify research and to develop a confidence to firstly begin and then to go further and increase one's skills, knowledge and understanding.

It is also important to follow-up research activities with parents and others who participate in the research. Such action is an important lead on, and part of the ethics of research is to discuss results with participants.

Where do we begin in our quest to develop competent, confident researchers in the field of early childhood education?

The first area to look at is the preparation of people for the workforce. Some would argue that research methodology should not be part of a first qualification. However, given that from 1991 onwards all professional three year courses in Australia in early childhood education will be of degree level, it would seem essential to include research methodologies as part of the first degree. Course curriculum developers will have a difficult task constructing a three year degree but it is vital for the profession that is be of degree level and one way of ensuring this is to build in over the three years, the study and development of research skills and methodologies. This is not expecting too much. For example, a literature review in any essay requires an understanding of research methodologies and literature reviews abound in professional units in courses.

There will always be the need for further advanced research study in higher degrees and this currently happens very successfully in the inservice courses which extend the first level qualification.

It is heartening also to see the increase of early childhood education Masters degree courses in universities in Australia, and note students in these awards have the opportunity to engage in advanced level research to extend the base for early childhood education.

IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL RESEARCH

Some of the areas of research which need to be investigated have application for many facets of early childhood. One area is the theory of early childhood practice. What is it that is distinctive and unique about early childhood practice? What is its empirical base?

> Early education needs to move beyond its psychological and theoretical basis to develop an empirical base specific to early childhood to verify its assumptions about meaningful teaching practices. (Goffin, 1989:200)

Other areas include teacher/child and child/child interactions, evaluations of programs and parent involvement. Australia has led the world in its parental involvement work in all types of early childhood settings. However, there is not a great deal of research available which details evaluations of the differing forms of parent involvement and their effectiveness or non-effectiveness. Yet most early childhood educators value such parent involvement without necessarily having clear ideas as to its benefits.

Research endeavours need also to include areas which have been overlooked to date. These include policy development in early childhood education, staff development (including inservice work), team skills, leadership, decision making and teacher morale. These are all areas which ultimately impinge on the quality of education given to children and are potential research areas.

Clark-Stewart's (1988:148) comments are still timely.

> ...contemporary issues in early childhood education demand both attention and careful research, just as those of 5, 10, 15, and 20 years ago did. We need to do research with large and representative samples, using experimental designs whenever possible, following children longitudinally, assessing social-emotional and ecological effects as well as effects on cognitive development, and investigating the processes of early education programs as well as the outcomes. In 1987 our naivete and our funds are greatly diminished. But the issues we face are just as important, just as pressing, as those a decade or two ago. If we are cautious in our claims and earnest in our efforts, we can get some answers and settle today's urgent issues before the next decade rolls around and the issues shift again. That should be our immediate goal.

Burns (1990:1) writes that research is a systematic investigation to find answers to a problem. Most early childhood professionals, including those who perceive themselves as strictly practitioners, would agree that there are many problems in their practice. Kell (1991), in a recent article, writes in a practical way as to how research findings may help teachers to plan more appropriately and to deal with problems. This is the beginning point for research, the identification of a significant problem. From this point on the intending researcher needs to determine

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what are the parameters of the research. A thorough investigation should yield whether the problem area can be studied by examining research questions or by hypotheses. The following steps then need to be taken.

- Read widely in the area - especially in relation to previous relevant studies.
- Refine the question(s) or hypothesis to its most basic form. This is an absolutely essential procedure in order to clarify the elements of the question(s) or hypothesis.
- Identify clearly the terms of reference of the study.
- Identify the theoretical basis of the study.
- Identify the aims/purposes of the study - what are the perceived outcomes of the study?
- Identify the specific objectives of the study.
- Outline the methodology - the procedures to be followed - including the sample, study design, evaluation procedures, the resources involved, both human and physical, the ethical issues involved and the time scale.

After the above have been identified in a broad research plan then the investigator needs to delineate clearly the specific steps of the study. For example:

- What format/procedures will be the best way for thoroughly reviewing the literature on the research topic?
- What are the specific terms of reference for the purposes of this study?
- What are the alternative methodologies which could be used?
  What are the advantages/disadvantages of each methodology?
  What specific techniques will the investigator use?
  How are the data to be analysed?
  What permission needs to be obtained?
  What other ethical issues need to be accounted for?

There will be several factors to be clarified and exactly what/how/when/where will depend on the type and scope of the study. However, time spent in the initial stage in identifying potential issues and problems is well worth the effort and can often save much time later on.

There are some approaches to research which are more appropriate than others for the field of early childhood education. Ethnographic studies, for example, have much to offer the potential researcher and allow for children and professionals to be studied in naturalistic settings. Insights gained from ethnographic studies can be important and give us insights into the complexities of teaching and learning.

CONCLUSION

The results of authoritative research should be brought to the attention of politicians, policy makers and the profession all of whom can hopefully act upon it.

The outcomes of research are important and should:

- increase the self-awareness and knowledge base of the profession thus ultimately contributing to an improved status;
- improve the quality of service provision for the clients;
- aid in the identification of policies which can be developed.
- allow for a better global perspective of the early childhood profession in Australia and the challenges it is facing.

It is necessary for the profession and for the professional her/himself to believe in the importance of the early childhood research base and to put both human and physical resources in this area. For as Clark (1989:114) writes:

> A sound knowledge of research and ability to articulate its key findings is crucial for professionals in early education. You will thus be equipped to communicate with colleagues, with parents and with administrators showing the contribution of broadly based and careful experiences at school and at home to a child's early education.

Savage (1990:13) stated in a keynote address for the Australian Association of Early Childhood Educators:

> ...research is like a treasure hunt in which we search after small pieces of knowledge but they are not pieces of a jigsaw which will fit into one place but rather they are like pieces of a kaleidoscope where we get changing patterns of knowledge.

Savage's metaphor is an apt one and can be used to challenge us in relation to our research priorities and directions. We need to look at changing patterns of knowledge. Early childhood education has been beset, like most professions, by decisions not based on authoritative research and by uncoordinated efforts. It is time that the profession put aside some of its differences and came up with research priorities which would further the cause of early childhood education.

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CHAPTER 8

HOW CAN EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES CATER FOR THE NEEDS OF ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES?

Isabelle Procter

This chapter addresses four issues relevant to early childhood services for Aboriginal communities, namely:

- *the nature of Aboriginality;*
- *the needs for Aboriginal children, parents and communities in the early childhood area;*
- *the training of Aboriginal people for work in early childhood services, and*
- *the role of research in providing data that can be used to develop appropriate early childhood programs for the Aboriginal clientele.*

INTRODUCTION

According to the Policy Statement of the Australian Early Childhood Association (AECA) (1986:9):

> All children in Australia should have equal opportunity to quality children's services. Such services should be developmentally based, integrating concepts of care and education with the flexibility to meet the particular needs of individual communities at a cost they can afford.

As advocated in the Policy Statement, such services should incorporate:

- a multicultural nature;
- the development and sociocultural needs of children;
- the use of personnel with a wide range of skills including those without formal qualifications;
- a sensitivity to the special needs of children;
- the encouragement of parent involvement in the program management and delivery;
- the provision of information to families about community support services and resources;
- health education programs and preventative health services;
- local and regional linkage and coordination to avoid duplication and provide a range of child care options;
- appropriate award wages for all staff;
- opportunities for community involvement in service planning and development, and
- parent/community involvement in regular service assessment.

In addition, "Children's services should support the diversity of cultures, languages and identities which offer all children the opportunity for developing positive attitudes towards themselves and others" (AECA, 1986:37).

It is assumed that these principles contained in the AECA Policy Statement are also applicable to children's services for Aboriginal* children and their families. How then are they applicable and how can early childhood services cater for the needs of Aboriginal children and their families and communities?

This chapter will address the relevance and applicability of early childhood services for the Aboriginal clientele within the Australian context through the discussion of:

* The term "Aboriginal" refers to both Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

- the nature of Aboriginality;
- the needs of Aboriginal children and their communities;
- the training of Aboriginal people for early childhood services, and
- the role of research.

These issues are a selection from a more extensive range covered in the National Policy Guidelines for Early Childhood Education published by the National Aboriginal Education Committee (1989). This publication is a major reference for Aboriginal early childhood and is highly recommended for further reading.

NATURE OF ABORIGINALITY

Across Australia, the Aboriginal population consists of diverse groups of people who reside in different localities and physical environments, who have different lifestyles to each other and whose languages, customs and social structure vary according to each group's situation. Aboriginal groups and societies are and have always been diverse, not only in their geographical placement but in many aspects of life, such as language, religion, political beliefs, ideals and history. Present day differences between Aboriginal people depend on their level of attachment to traditional cultural values, the degree to which they have adopted a European lifestyle and the local customs of differing regional groups.

Nonetheless, despite their diversities, there is a universal bonding among Aboriginal people who share the unique cultural frame of reference known as Aboriginality. This is the main commonality which contributes to the strong sense of identity between Aboriginal people.

Considering the cultural pluralism of Australian society today, the existence of Aboriginality and the cultural orientations of Aboriginal groups must be recognised and allowed to be maintained as an integral part of their uniqueness and their entitlements as the original inhabitants of Australia. This in turn will assist the young Aboriginal child's need to function in a multicultural society as themselves and develop their own cultural identity as a starting point for lifelong progress.

Present day indications are that greater improvements are needed in recognising Aboriginality and Aboriginal people's cultural orientations. A report released by the Aboriginal Education Policy Taskforce (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1988: 2) claims that:

> Racism is a key factor in the alienation Aboriginal people experience. . . the most challenging issue of all is to ensure education is available to all

Aboriginal people in a manner that reinforces rather than suppresses their unique cultural identity.

Clearly, all early childhood services have a role to play in bringing about this improvement for the benefit of young Aboriginal children.

NEEDS OF ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

Like all other Australian children, young Aboriginal children need opportunities to develop positive attitudes towards themselves and others and programs that take cognisance of their developmental, sociocultural and special needs. Their parents and communities need access to equitable children's services that are appropriate for their children and permit their own participation and involvement.

Early childhood services can ensure that the needs of Aboriginal children and their communities are catered for, at least in part, through the attendance to such fundamentals as the learning environment, the curriculum, child-rearing practices and community participation and involvement.

The ideal learning environment for young Aboriginal children is one where each child is viewed and respected as an individual and as a member of a group with distinctive cultural orientation and where the pedagogy is conducive to meeting their educational needs. In settings like this, the focus would be on the enhancement of successful learning, the promotion of feelings of self-esteem and self-worth and the fostering of cultural traits and learning strengths. There would also be opportunities for Aboriginal children to obtain skills and develop competencies to enhance their educational progress.

The curriculum in the ideal educational setting for young Aboriginal children would not be one which is designed only for middle class Anglo-Celtic children. Rather it would be based on an understanding that Aboriginal children who are expected to learn and abide by two distinctly different sets of expectations at home and in the early childhood setting may suffer culture conflict. It must demonstrate an awareness that Aboriginal children's view of themselves must be recognised, fostered and respected.

As well, the ideal curriculum would be inclusive in nature and accommodate Aboriginal content as well as be accompanied by relevant resources and materials that have been designed and developed in conjunction with Aboriginal early childhood educators. It would recognise the value of Aboriginal child-rearing practices and advocate them as different and not deficient in comparison to Anglo-Celtic practices.

Within the context of early childhood services, a general understanding of Aboriginal child-rearing practices and the wide differences that exist between Anglo-Australian and Aboriginal methods, is essential. There needs to be recognition that Aboriginal children come to early childhood settings with beliefs and ways of behaviour from their cultural child-rearing practices and socialisation processes. There should also be promotion within early childhood services of a better understanding and respect between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people of each group's cultural child-rearing practices.

Ideally, Aboriginal parents and communities would participate and be involved in the planning, administration, delivery and management of early childhood services which presumably would be intended to benefit their children. This participation and involvement is essential at all levels, from the local community through to state and federal levels and can be carried out in a wide range of categories within the sphere of early childhood services. It would help ensure the relevance of early childhood experiences for Aboriginal children and assist Aboriginal parents and communities to accept and identify more closely with early childhood services and systems.

The promotion of participation and involvement of Aboriginal people in the early childhood sphere is clearly dependent on the recognition that they already possess a knowledge base and set of skills which, although culturally different to Anglo-Celtic ones, will still enable Aboriginal people to be effective administrators, managers and participants in related aspects of early childhood services. This would depend upon the provision of opportunities for Aboriginal people to further develop and extend their knowledge of Aboriginal cultural studies, upon approaches that can be utilised for parent and community participation and consultation and upon involvement in the decision-making process at various levels. At the present time, the existence of such recognition and the provision of opportunities is scarce and needs to be greatly improved.

To effect serious commitment to Aboriginal participation and involvement in early childhood services, the provision of adequate Aboriginal resources is crucial. In this regard, increasing attention must be given to the employment of Aboriginal people at all levels in the early childhood area and to the development of appropriate training programs and support services. There are still relatively few Aboriginal people employed in the administration and management of early childhood services. This factor tends to limit the effectiveness of policy making and the linkage between systems and Aboriginal parents and communities.

TRAINING OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Aboriginal children's first experience in formal early childhood centres will be more successful if staff in these settings share the same cultural background as the child. In this regard, Aboriginal people need to be represented in all categories of employment within and related to early childhood services, as both professionals and paraprofessionals.

For this to occur, appropriate training courses need to be developed, funded and implemented. The establishment of such courses would depend on liaison and consultation between local and state Aboriginal communities and TAFE and other tertiary institutions.

Currently there are a range of courses that purport to prepare Aboriginal people for work in the early childhood field. These include degree/diploma courses in early childhood education or child studies and diploma/certificate courses in child care. These are generally full-time/part-time on campus courses which lead to nationally accredited qualifications in mainstream systems. As such, these courses tend to have limited relevance to the Aboriginal clientele through their core content and students/trainees receive only a basic introduction to issues relating to this clientele through specific optional units.

Courses especially designed for Aboriginal students to work in early childhood services are usually pre-vocational in nature, geared towards child care, are federally funded and have little or no accreditation towards recognised mainstream courses. Ironically these 'special' courses seriously attempt to provide a culturally orientated and relevant program for Aboriginal people wishing to work with young Aboriginal children and their parents. The Basic Child Care Course (BCCC) in Western Australia and the pre-vocational child care course at Prahran College of TAFE in Victoria are two such courses.

The AECA Policy Statement (1986:19) contains the following statement relating to the preparation of personnel for work in children's services:

> Personnel responsible for the planning, organisation, administration and implementation of children's services must have gained appropriate qualifications to enable them to communicate/work effectively with children, parents, colleagues, other professionals and community workers.

Ideally and given all things were equal and relevant for Aboriginal people, 'appropriate qualifications' could mean those which result from undertaking recognised degree/diploma/certificate training courses through TAFE and other tertiary institutions. Certainly a number of Aboriginal people aspire to and through standard mainstream processes, achieve these qualifications. However, for a

majority of Aboriginal people who are, or wish to be, employed in the early childhood field, the attainment of such 'appropriate qualifications' is impractical or inappropriate for their needs.

To improve the situation for Aboriginal people, the definition of 'appropriate qualifications' for this group has to be changed, at least until 'all things are equal'. Serious consideration has to be given by early childhood services and their systems to the premise that a range of qualifications is possible to match the needs of culturally different and disadvantaged groups. For instance, recognition and accreditation can be given to courses specifically designed to enable Aboriginal people to become professionals and paraprofessionals in early childhood settings in their own communities. These courses can combine the basic principles and fundamentals of education, care and related issues and services; be undertaken on-site in communities; be practical and culturally relevant in nature and be implemented through methods more appropriate and conducive to successful attainment by Aboriginal people.

The establishment and acceptance of such courses will involve some controversy, especially among conservative thinkers. However, since the 1990s is likely to be an era of commitment to equity and social justice and to encouragement of self management by disadvantaged minority groups, progressive and innovative approaches which assist this commitment are more likely to receive support by both the Aboriginal and wider community.

THE ROLE OF RESEARCH

In relation to the need for early childhood services by Aboriginal children, their parents and communities and the training of Aboriginal people for employment within the early childhood sphere, the role of research can be significant. The role should be to examine the appropriateness of existing theories, methodologies and approaches currently used to shape both early childhood services and related training programs. It should provide comprehensive data of a sociological and multidisciplinary nature which takes into account Aboriginal perspectives and can be used as a basis for the development of more progressive early childhood program models for the Aboriginal clientele.

Currently there is a lack of available research which specifically relates to early childhood programs for Aboriginal children and the related enhancement of self-esteem, cultural identity and successful learning. Programs for Aboriginal children and people have largely utilised research into cognitive and psycholinguistic

characteristics. This research, however, has focused on the pure application of developmental theories such as those put forward by Piaget and other European theorists. It has dominated Aboriginal early childhood in the past two decades.

Studies of a more ethnographic nature, such as those by Harris (1984) and Graham (1981), indicate attempts to provide data which is more culturally meaningful, at least in relation to education. Harris' study portrays the contradictions between learning styles, expectations and characteristics of Aboriginal children and those demanded by schools. Graham has provided outlines for an approach which attempts to assist teachers to develop more appropriate early childhood educational programs for Aboriginal children. Both Harris' and Graham's work relate specifically to traditionally-oriented Aboriginal children in isolated communities, although application of their work has focused on many diverse groups within the Aboriginal population.

Such application, although well-intentioned, has created dilemmas in early childhood for Aboriginal children. On the one hand there are attempts to sensitise professionals and paraprofessionals to the issues involved in the consideration of cultural traits and the educational process. However, there are no attempts to provide general guidelines that can be used to consider program types and components such as goals, content and methodology in terms of structure, timing, personnel and setting, or the effectiveness of these across a diversity of Aboriginal groups and lifestyles.

In view of the lack of research and relevant data in the area of early childhood services for Aboriginal groups, further research and systematic studies must be promoted and encouraged. In conjunction with this, the early childhood field needs to seriously consider the purpose and nature of any research carried out, to ensure that it is done in consultation with and participation of Aboriginal people. It should provide data that is appropriate and useful for the development of relevant early childhood programs for Aboriginal children, parents and communities.

CONCLUSION

The issues in this chapter are a small selection of a much larger range which separately, are as important as those dealt with here and collectively, make a significant contribution to the area of early childhood services for Aboriginal children and communities.

It is hoped that these issues are raised and seriously considered in all early childhood forums. This has not been the situation in the past and has resulted in the

Aboriginal clientele being 'forgotten'. The future challenge for the early childhood field is to contribute to positive changes in the situation for the betterment of Aboriginal and other Australians.

> *The realisation of the child's need and right to be able to function successfully in both Aboriginal and the broader Australian society must be reflected in the development and implementation of early childhood programs for Aboriginal children.*

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CHAPTER 9

MEN IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES: WHY? WHY NOT?

Margaret Clyde

The early childhood field has been slow to accept males into the profession. While research on the efficacy of male early childhood workers is unclear, recent Australian research indicates that preservice early childhood students perceive that males and females interact differently with young children and hold different views relating to their place in the early childhood field. Does this matter and if so, what can be done to change these attitudes?

Early childhood has always been regarded as something of a paradox by the community, its users and those who work in the field: what other group would expect high quality services from philanthropically-minded, underpaid employees; what other group would debate whether or not 'care' was a service for parents or children when it is clearly a response to community need; what other group would earnestly but inappropriately debate whether education was care or care was education; what other group would trumpet the need for young children to develop into divergent, creative thinkers and doers while at the same time maintain its own rigid, traditional thoughts about early childhood being a 'woman's place'?

At a time when the community in general is becoming less resistant to diversity in terms of encouraging people from a variety of different social, economic or ethnic/cultural groups and those with physical or intellectual disabilities to operate a wide range of activities, it is difficult to appreciate the continuing opposition to male early childhood workers.

Hopson (1990) has suggested that it is possible - and necessary - to assist young children to develop those skills which are necessary for them to challenge unfair behaviour. She suggests:

> Teach children to recognise stereotypes and caricatures of people. Young people can become quick to spot 'unfair' images if they are helped to think critically about what they see in books, on television, in the form of toys and so on. (Hopson, 1990:11)

It follows then, that although the early childhood field has developed a reasonable strategy for assisting young children to develop critical thinking skills, the field itself is unable, or unwilling, to face the fact that it is biased against male practitioners and as such can be adjudged guilty of unfair behaviour.

This concept of males in early childhood settings and the lack of male workers in Australia seems to point up a further area of traditional conservatism in early childhood services. While there is a disconcerting lack of interest or positive speculation on this position in Australia, it would be true to say that in other countries, including the United States and England, there has been an increasing interest in, and awareness of, the need for a more equitable balance between males and females in early childhood settings, just as males have been encouraged to join other previously female-dominated professions including social work and nursing.

Over a long period of time, parents, teachers and psychologists have made frequent and intense demands for more male teachers at the early childhood level, that is in the areas of child care, preschool, kindergarten and the first few grades of the primary school (Gold and Reis, 1978). In fact, Bailey (1983) has asserted that male involvement in early childhood programs is not a product of contemporary

thinking and values. He asserts that Frederick Froebel, the father of the kindergarten movement, had all-male staff for his original kindergarten in 1837 and that women were only admitted to the fold after Froebel's own marriage! While we can speculate about the reasons for Froebel's change of attitude, the fact remains that for the last century or so, early childhood education has been perceived as primarily the domain of women. This assertion was reinforced by instructions and directions which were issued at various times. It is not so long ago that males were prohibited in the USA from teaching at the early school grades. This quote sums up the position in 1947:

> Men should not be asked to play nursemaid to young children…it should be made the policy of the school system to place men only in the upper grades in their chosen subject fields so that such work will come to be characterised as the work for men. Women should appear as out of place in such assignments as men are now in the lower elementary grades.
>
> (Kaplan, in Robinson, 1981:29)

The thinking that men did not belong in the early childhood field prevailed in the 1950s and is epitomised in the following quote:

> One could hardly imagine a situation in which a man would be in his element teaching a class of kindergarteners. He would immediately become suspect.
>
> (Robinson, 1981:27)

This curious debate apparently assumed a different direction in America in the 1960s and 1970s, in that a reason was sought for permitting men to work with young children because of the positive contribution males could make to the profession. As a result, two schools of argument have emerged to support the inclusion of males in the early childhood field. One, known as the traditionalists, wants to reinforce traditional sex-role norms, the other labelled not surprisingly as the nontraditionalists, base their argument on the need to loosen and change the traditional sex-role norms.

The traditionalists, who predominated in the 1960s and early 1970s, expressed a concern that the female-dominated early childhood years would result in 'feminised' boys. Numerous assertions have been made relating to the male's positive role in the early childhood developmental process. These include preventing children from perceiving school as a female-dominated institution, improving school performance and classroom atmosphere for boys, acting as a counter-balance for 'urbanisation' and 'family disintegration problems', providing masculine role models for boys, preventing juvenile delinquency and finally, changing the image of the early childhood profession itself.

However, research which has been undertaken to support these assertions does not shed any real light on the topic, mainly because the subjects have been too few, the variables too many and most research lacked a clear theoretical basis of child behaviour and gender identification and development (Gold et al, 1977).

> Arguments and research in this area have not attempted to fit into a theoretical context, relying mainly instead on common sense, an alluring but sometimes untrustworthy guide. (Gold and Reis, 1978:4)

Several examples should serve to emphasise this point. In the area of sex role models, it has been argued that for young boys who are trying to evolve a sex-role differentiated from that of females, contact on a daily and prolonged basis with male teachers should serve to help clarify their concept of the masculine sex-role. In addition, since children are generally reinforced for imitating same-sex models, male models should also give boys more opportunity and incentive to imitate a male operating in an academic setting. However, young children do not characteristically select the model whose sex matches their own; the sex of the model is less important than the sex-appropriateness of the modelled behaviour relative to the observer. This may be due to the fact that male teachers are not usually concerned with providing an example of particularly masculine behaviour, but rather are more concerned with their role as an early childhood professional providing examples of values and behaviours that are suitable for both boys and girls (Siefert, 1975).

Boys in particular are thought to suffer from the absence of the father figure or low levels of positive interaction with the father who is 'inadequate'. Therefore the argument is that men should be encouraged to work with young children on the assumption that there is a difference in young boys' adjustment, achievement and attitudes when taught by a male rather than a female teacher. All these views and many more, appear to assume - either explicitly or inexplicitly - that male and female teachers differ in basic characteristics and teaching styles in such a way as to make a measurable, qualitative difference to their effect on children (Gold and Reis, 1978).

Further it has been claimed that female teachers cannot teach boys as well as male teachers can. Male teachers are thought to be better able to cope with the more active behaviour of the boys, as well as assisting the boys to achieve masculine sex identity. Some educators have argued that female teachers favour girls by demonstrating unreal expectations of boys' behaviour.

However, few studies suggest that male teachers and female teachers treat young children differently, although it could be asserted that male teachers may positively affect boys' perceptions of spatial relations. Brophy and Good (1974) have summarised the literature by concluding that male and female teachers treat young boys and girls similarly. More recent studies also support this position. Robinson's work in child care centres supports the view that male and female child care workers' personality, characteristics and methods of reinforcing children's behaviour are similar. It may be that other factors are more important and that common sense has indeed been, to use Gold and Reis' (1978:4) phrase, "an alluring but sometimes untrustworthy guide".

Despite lack of evidence to support the presence of males in early childhood on the basis of positive development of gender concepts or attitudes towards self, school and life, the 1980s have brought a new argument for men to play a significant role in early childhood services, namely that young children will learn that men can be nurturing, loving and understanding - just as women are perceived to be (Riley et al, 1985). This androgynous approach, adopted by the nontraditionalists of the last decade, provides the most professionally viable reason for encouraging men to work with young children. The blending of both conventional masculine and feminine traits into one personality, encapsulated in the androgynous concept, seems to offer the young child a balanced program because an androgynous adult has the psychological freedom to engage in whatever behaviour seems most effective at the time.

> The males' special contribution would consist not in 'acting like a man' for children, but in disproving the idea that men need act in some special 'manly' way. (Siefert, 1974:171)

Notwithstanding this, men and women will behave differently with young children. Men, by their own preferences, may choose more messy experiences, more 'rough housing', more activities with trucks, more physical interactions than do many women, but they would still be fulfilling their role of providing a variety of ways of meeting the young child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs (Robinson, et al, 1980). This androgynous balance should permit all early childhood educators to perform their role more comfortably and possibly more competently. It follows then, that although we cannot put every young boy in a male teacher's or caregiver's learning environment, we should be encouraging involvement of male teachers and caregivers in early childhood education, until a more equitable balance prevails.

First, we in Australia need to examine the reasons why men would want to work with young children in a predominantly caring situation in which the majority of their working colleagues would be women. Siefert (1974) has suggested that other staff may perceive the male as entering the early childhood profession for the 'wrong' reasons, such as promotion and idealism. This is not difficult to believe as evidence from the field of nursing supports this view. In recent times male nurses have run the gauntlet of suspicious and threatened people in a predominantly female occupation. The problem however is deeper than mere superficial assertion because such attitudes could interfere with the potential effectiveness of both male and female early childhood workers.

Siefert (1974) has attempted to gauge the attitudes of practising early childhood (female) personnel to the concept of men entering the early childhood field. His results indicated that the respondents operate on the premise that women, more than men, choose the early childhood profession to facilitate the co-ordination of work and family life; that men do not require such good rapport with their colleagues; that men are more successful in preschool or the lower primary school

grades if they keep moving around (at the expense of concern for the children is the usual unwritten implication of this premise); and finally that men, more than women, need a 'love of children' to ensure their success. In other words men have to like children more or, for them, the early childhood would not be worth the hassle! The most insulting comment was that, in the main, early childhood professionals do not expect men to interact sensitively or skillfully with either children or colleagues!

Unfortunately research undertaken by Clyde (1989) and Clyde and Rodd (1989) provide similar paradoxical evidence in the early childhood field in Australia. In a survey on ethical concerns of one hundred and seven Victorian early childhood workers (both child care and kindergarten workers), a majority of female workers (57.1%) indicated that they were presently, or had in the past, worked with a male early childhood worker. While only four males responded to the survey, it appears that a greater number of males may be working in the early childhood field, particularly in child care, where 54.0% of the staff indicated they had worked with a male compared to 27.4% of kindergarten/preschool teachers. One of the possible concerns listed in the survey was "sharing the nurturing role with the male early childhood workers". The Australian respondents ranked this issue as the last among the other issues, with only 6.7% reporting that it was of some concern, compared to 70.6% of respondents who indicated that it was of little or no concern as an ethical issue. In fact, 90.8% of the respondents indicated that males should be encouraged to work in the early childhood field. Males were seen as making a special contribution to the field because males provided a role model for children of female sole parents (21.6%), and have a different outlook on life compared with females (14.4%), while male strength, character and personality act as a balance and challenge to the female stereotyping of the nurturing and caregiving role in early childhood services.

The respondents presented the following explanations for the limited number of male workers in the early childhood years: lack of public acceptance (15.2%); lack of pay and promotional opportunities (8.8%); the stigma of male involvement in child abuse (7.2%) and conflict over the 'naturalness' of males performing basic care tasks (7.2%). These concerns were raised by a limited number of respondents when compared to the overwhelming positive attitude (90.8%) towards male involvement in the field.

In spite of the fact that the 'positives', as listed, were related to the 1970s concepts concerned with working with males, the Australian picture looks positive, professional and progressive. However this is the source of a further paradox. In an uncited work, the author surveyed one hundred female students from each of the diploma courses in child care and preschool teaching from a Victorian tertiary institution on their first day of their tertiary course and a further one hundred female students on the last day of their three year course. The students were asked to suggest the way in which three mythical early childhood workers, 'Mary',

'Steve' and the androgynous 'Chris', would respond to four typical experiences - the worker sees a child crying; some children are building an obstacle course or are busy in the digging patch; a child obviously needs a quiet time on someone's lap; Pamela is having trouble at the woodwork bench. The responses were similar for both the first and third year groups of students while the responses from child care and preschool students were identical.

About half the first and third year students indicated that they believed that 'Mary', 'Steve' and 'Chris' would react to each situation in the same way, but the remaining fifty percent of the respondents suggested that Mary would place the child on her lap whereas Steve would sit "next to the child", while Chris would ask the child to "join the rest of the children and learn together", or "do what Mary would do; perhaps because he's a male he might ask aloud what the child was crying for first because women tend to touch more quickly than men", or ask another child to comfort a crying child. There were many similar examples of the androgynous Chris seeking the support of other children to meet their peers' needs, whereas Steve would assist, direct and tell children at the woodwork bench and digging areas and Mary would use language to explain or describe.

Clearly the first and final year early childhood students had well conceived ideas of the way in which male and female early childhood workers will react to identical situations.

In addition, all students were asked to select from a list of prepared examples reasons why 'Mary', 'Steve' and 'Chris' would want to be an early childhood worker and the length of time they could be expected to remain in the field. While the majority of students suggested that all three workers would have the same main reason for choosing to be an early childhood worker, usually a desire to work with young children, there was a significant difference in their perceptions of the amount of time males and females would spend in the field; females would spend "more than five years" (the final choice), whereas males would spend between one and two years or two and five years in the early childhood field. Clearly these students perceived males as transient workers in the early childhood field. This kind of response reinforces the work of Siefert (1974) in his American study and highlights the potential anomalies in the early childhood field; men are welcome to work in the field, colleagues like working with them for traditional, rather than contemporary reasons, they expect males to behave differently from females in their handling of day to day situations in the centre and they are sure that males do not see early childhood as a long term career, as is the case with females.

Early childhood is a profession which prides itself on demonstrating a high level of interpersonal skills and establishing a caring, supportive environment for all the participants. If this is the case, it may be possible for males and females to accept the commitment and capacities of their colleauges of both sexes to providing a

supportive, nurturing environment for the young child. Hopefully this androgynous concept of the work of both female and male workers will become the dominant characteristic of the good early childhood worker of the next century.

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CHAPTER 10

FIELD EXPERIENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD TERTIARY COURSES: MAKING OR BREAKING A PROFESSIONAL IMAGE?

Beverley Lambert

The need to reconceptualise some underlying assumptions of field experience programs and to assert new directions aligned to early childhood principles rather than traditional educational practicum models, is discussed in this chapter. Current field experience programs as agents of positive professional socialisation are questioned.

THE PROBLEMATIC NATURE OF FIELD EXPERIENCE

That field experience programs are an important component of general teacher training courses, is an accepted and well documented fact. However the role of field experience in tertiary courses preparing professionals to work in areas of early childhood specialisation, has not until recently, been systematically documented or debated.

Nevertheless, there is a consensual view among related studies which strongly indicates that the supposed benefits of field experience for preservice students generally, may well be questionnable. The most commonly identified obstacles to success are as follows.

- Many field experience programs do not assist the student to relate theory to practice (Barnes, 1987; Lanier and Little, 1980; Tisher, 1987; Zeichner, 1987).
- Students usually realign their professional philosophies more with those of their host supervisor or placement supervisor, than with those of their tertiary lecturers, or other campus based theoretical perspectives (Butzow and Ryan, 1975; Casey and McNeil, 1982; Hull and Baker, 1984; Lambert and Sparrow, 1990; Price, 1961).
- Confusion still frequently exists concerning the everchanging roles and responsibilities of the student, host supervisor and visiting early childhood lecturer, to the extent where conflict and disharmony can negatively affect students' practice (Duck and Cunningham, 1985; Grimmett and Ratzloff, 1986; Yarrow, 1984).
- How to effectively supervise and evaluate students' progress during field placements (Caruso and Fawcett, 1986; Honig, 1985; Smith, 1985; Smyth, 1984; Price, 1987; Tyler, 1985).
- The search for new practicum models as an integral part of restructuring tertiary courses for reasons of political and economic expediency (most recently, Australian Education Council, 1990a, 1990b).

The nature of the problems cited above must also raise questions about the suitability of some field experience programs to foster positive professional development in preservice students.

The process of professional socialisation is well researched, especially in relation to primary and secondary teacher graduates and trainees. Less documentation exists concerning this process in the early childhood field generally, let alone acknowledging Australian perspectives.

It is not the aim of this chapter to explore these research dimensions but to acknowledge their existence and that they affirm a process of professional socialisation does occur, but that the ways in which this process is affected by field

experience, are both complex and problematic. From this background of noted difficulties, field experience as an instrument of de-professionalisation will be the main focus of the following discussion.

FIELD EXPERIENCE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Field experiences are an integral part of early childhood preservice courses in Australia. By their nature they serve to negate, confirm or extend students' perceptions about their likely professional role by providing opportunities to independently question and test theoretical bases acquired on campus and come to intelligent conclusions about their purposefulness. They also enable early childhood students to become involved with children and their families on a continuing basis. Put simply, they allow the early childhood novice to feel and behave professionally.

As such field placements are a potent agent of professional socialisation. It is therefore a tragic irony that in many instances 'prac' may actually do more to inhibit the development of a professional self image than to enhance it.

This problem mostly arises when the underlying assumptions of field experience programs reflect a traditional primary/secondary educational frame of reference instead of an early childhood one. For a variety of historical, political and administrative reasons, many early childhood field experience programs still reflect varying degrees of this burdensome legacy.

THE LEGACY MYSTIQUE

In the absence of well articulated early childhood approaches to designing and evaluating field experiences, most if not all early childhood practica originated to some extent as an imitation of traditional educational models, suitably categorised by educationalists themselves as training models (Turney, 1989).

These training models are typified by a mechanised and hierarchical framework, frequently influenced by structural functionalist assumptions that the field experience will mould 'trainees' to fit into their place in a technocratic and centralised system (Blackledge and Hunt, 1985; Nobbs, 1983). That the terms 'training' and 'practice' teaching are still used emphatically in teacher training courses today, indicates this restrictive and assimilationist ideology still pervades.

For early childhood students, this is of great concern and must be considered a serious threat to professional development as it actually serves to disempower the student while simultaneously empowering the two bodies who do not need further empowerment, the host supervisor and the visiting early childhood lecturer.

As a consequence of this process, one of the most cherished practices in early childhood, that of encouraging children to take an active and responsible role in their own learning, may not be something many early childhood students will themselves experience, see modelled or be encouraged to do, during their preservice practical experiences. Thus a valuable opportunity to provide them with continuity of experience and learning (another cherished early childhood maxim which in this case bears relevance to important philosophical and theoretical bases of practice) has been denied them.

Field experiences which have emanated from traditional educational models will usually focus on quantities of work to be completed within a specified period of time. Consequently 'passing prac' will depend on certain amounts of concrete and easily measured end products being produced, such as a particular number of lessons or activities to be taken per day or a certain amount of subject curricula to be taught.

This is not compatible with an early childhood approach which would be geared more towards processes. Some likely examples could well be:

- consistently encouraging children to develop positive attitudes about themselves as independent achievers and learners (hence an emphasis on dispositional processes including self esteem and confidence).
- identifying and extending individual levels of ability (hence an emphasis on interrelational processes, establishing warm relationships with and among children and understanding children in terms of their familial backgrounds).
- identifying phases of transition and consolidation both in the learning **process** and other developmental areas and stimulating positive progress accordingly (hence an emphasis on developmental processes using child development bases from which systematic planning and evaluation occurs, whereby appropriate formal and informal learning **experiences** rather than activities are offered).

Passing 'prac' in this instance would involve qualitative rather than quantitative measures. For instance, in relation to the three points above, a final year student might be expected to:

- develop one or several individual case studies within the framework of a particular socio cultural context, which traces and evaluates selected aspects of developmental progress (or lack of it).
- develop strategies and a professional rationale for systematically gathering, formatting and organising developmental information about children.

- prepare learning experiences which can be seen to relate logically to these records, and hence be justified by them.
- show an ability to balance professional activities that cater for individual needs and progress, with an ability to cater for the social and learning needs of the group as a whole.
- provide a rationale for the need to evaluate progress (or the lack of it), and actively incorporate this information into further planning. To develop examples and strategies to show how this could best be achieved in a particular placement setting.

The differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches indicates that the traditional moulding process is indeed a manipulative and pervasive one because under its influence teaching **activities** become the pivot for thinking, feeling and doing during the field placement, with little or no focus on underlying processes. Thus the intellectual bases of practice tend to be passed over and attention is diverted to mere concrete surface characteristics. This technical orientation can often still be found blatantly enshrined in the 'prac handbook' itself originally developed around *a priori* conformist assumptions about large group behavioural and learning patterns. Combined, these influences reduce the significance of the field experience to a mere credentialising process and in doing so, generate a false consciousness about the early childhood professional at work. Consequently the resultant professional orientation becomes more typical of a group mentality perspective rather than one of intellectual independence and innovation (Lanier and Little, 1980). It could be argued that field experiences like this probably contribute more to the development of non career trainees than to career oriented professionals. It is the latter group that the early childhood field in Australia desperately needs now.

The practicum as an instrument of passive conformism deserves greater attention. Edwards (1990), in a longitudinal Australian study of early childhood preservice students, notes that differences between host supervisors' and placement students' philosophies are considered by students to be a problem. Hull and Baker (1984) refer to a hidden agenda of both personal and professional conformism as expressed in the purely functional expectations many host placements have of visiting students. In placements where this occurs, students quickly realise that 'fitting in' is the paramount goal to achieve in order to pass their practical experience. In a recent survey, of fifty five early childhood preservice students studying at a rural institution, eighty five percent of second and third year students combined, identified the host supervisor as having the strongest influence on their professional attitudes during field placements, and acknowledged that in response to this, they adapted their own philosophies accordingly. The interesting thing about these answers is that when asked previously to identify and rate the perceived role of the early childhood professional in terms of ideals and not experienced realities, the same students overwhelmingly identified non conform-

ist preferences such as innovator, political advocate for family services, researcher, and so on (Lambert and Sparrow, 1990). In extending this study to include city institutions, the above data patterns were found to be statistically-significant ($P<.05$) (Lambert, 1991).

Preservice practical experiences that are still influenced by bureaucratic educational assumptions, discourage students from developing a wide, critical understanding of the sociocultural dynamics of their field placements. This in turn deprives them of a chance to become constructive opportunists, who can capitalise both spontaneously and deliberately on the rich and vibrant contextual influences that shape children's behaviour and abilities in social settings.

Added to this, practicum structures still tainted by outdated assumptions about teacher training, where school classrooms are the only focus for professional activity, not only bear little relevance to the diversity of settings early childhood students find themselves working in but create problems for the way in which the students' progress is evaluated. Field placements for instance in country areas, could involve mobile services for geographically isolated families, seasonal (harvest) programs in fruit picking areas, early intervention programs which include town based as well as outreach/mobile services, both of which offer centre and home based components, plus the usual range of centre based children's services including school based experiences. This increasing diversity of early childhood settings needs to be reflected in the way students' progress on field placements is evaluated. The process should become more individualised and therefore be consistent with early childhood philosophy based upon sound theoretical principles about child development, which emphasises the recognition of the individual needs of learners. It should not continue to be based on outdated *a priori* expectations whereby preset, universal criteria are used which assume equal progress will occur in the same areas to the same degree for every student.

The student in a rural mobile service for instance, who has varying degrees of intermittent contact with families, could well spend up to seventy percent of their time resourcing and supporting parents and thus, working with children indirectly. Another heavy time component could revolve around administration, management and equipment storage and maintenance. On the other hand, students in a town based child care centre might well find most of their client needs to involve extending learning, hence individualised program planning and evaluation may well constitute seventy percent of their working time. Urban field experiences, although having different extremes, would nevertheless contain the same diverse range of settings, contexts and client needs.

Considering this, the call to develop more individualised ways of evaluating students' progress on field experience is overdue. In order to be consistent with early childhood philosophy about active learning, such strategies would need to

enable the student to take an active role in the decision making process which in turn would need to become more relevant to the particular field placement. Although many of us may think we allow for round table discussions about students' progress in field placements, final decisions are still frequently made under the influence of the old power hierarchy because the roles of the main participants have never been reanalysed and redefined. The catch cry 'but there's not enough time' (for such negotiations to take place) can be dismissed as a fatuous misconception. It is not the time, but the process which is the issue. Supermarket styled preservice courses consisting of a series of subject areas which are merely juxtaposed rather than integrated and of field experience which is merely another 'thing to be fitted in', are the problem, not time. Practicum course structures cemented within a bureaucratic vision of the mass organisation of people and places are the problem, not time. The issue is ideology.

On the other hand, early childhood courses which can assert their own professional identity are usually geared towards a more honest integration of theoretical bases with professional practice in the workplace. When this occurs, field experience programs are not considered as an 'extra' to the main course, but an integral part of semester programs involving regular contact hours which can be used flexibly to facilitate true negotiations among the main parties concerned, at times to suit them all.

RECONCEPTUALISING 'PRAC'

This discussion so far has not been intended to give the impression that no development or innovations are occurring in early childhood field course components in this country.

In some instances, multidirectional frameworks are being used based on equal triadic negotiations among the early childhood student, host supervisor and visiting early childhood lecturer. This team of three builds and modifies its own unique frame of reference in relation to a particular context. Greater expectation is placed on the student to suggest, innovate and justify decisions (MacNaughton and Clyde, 1990). Contractual approaches like this have noted advantages in that they more clearly define the purposes of the field experience and the responsibilities of those actively involved. Consequently, they minimise the confusion, suspicion and cynicism that often arises when external, campus based parameters, which may also be unfamiliar and therefore threatening to the host supervisor, are imposed (Davis and Davis, 1977; Duck and Cunningham, 1985; Grimmett and Ratzloff, 1986; Yarrow, 1984). Using the medium of triadic discussions, new and different theoretical perspectives can be introduced to host supervisors in a way that is more informative, supportive and tactful.

Such developments in Australia parallel similar moves in America that have occurred since the 1970s. These are best reflected in the *Child Development Associate Program* (Bentley, 1975; Cooper and Weber, 1973; Phillips, 1990). Philosophically this and related programs present a client oriented process approach, flexible enough to capitalise on the unique dynamics and contexts of each situation. They have been developed within a framework identifying a range of professional competencies from which the early childhood personnel involved - including of course the placement student - select and prioritise those it is felt are most appropriate for the client needs in a particular setting. These can be modified or extended as the need arises during the field experience. Thus, students are supported in taking a degree of responsibility towards challenging and furthering their own professional development.

Students may well be more prepared to accept this responsibility than their early childhood lecturers like to think. In the survey of early childhood students mentioned previously, seventy five and sixty five percent of second and third year students respectively, stated that this was what they had expected to be doing as part of their field placement experience, at the same time identifying a preference for this type of interaction (Lambert and Sparrow, 1990).

REDEFINING FIELD EXPERIENCE PROGRAMS: REDEFINING THEORETICAL BASES

Increasingly, early childhood professionals are vigorously and intelligently working towards re-establishing field experience as an empowering and professionalising experience, logically related to appropriate theoretical and philosophical principles.

If we are to continue doing this, we need to develop stronger and more informed arguments based on contemporary theoretical approaches. As such, ecological theory should be of particular interest and relevance to the early childhood field because it offers a multidimensional approach to understanding and analysing the quality and characteristics of sociocultural environments and the role of the professional helper within these environments. Early childhood centres, like schools, are sociocultural agencies first and foremost. Any learning that occurs in these settings, whether of a formal or incidental nature, occurs because of this vibrant climate and not despite it. Similarly any professional development that will occur does so for the same reasons (Gehrke, 1981; Kilgore et al, 1990).

Ecological theoretical perspectives have mostly been generated by Bronfonbrenner's ecological model of human development (for more detailed reading, see

Bronfonbrenner, 1977; Garbarino, 1982). Considering the emphasis on diversity and individuality in early childhood philosophy and practice, ecological theory could well provide a suitable frame of reference for reconceptualising the old issues. Because it need not be tied to a static concrete model, it allows for critical reflection on a continuing rather than a spasmodic basis and thus, constant reassessment of whichever constructs it is applied to.

Once more relevant theoretical perceptions and foundations have been identified, it becomes easier to move towards a process of analysing those aspects of field experience which are problematic. This involves identifying how the process of disempowerment works and then, reconceptualising the structure and philosophy of the field experience program so that it can more appropriately address contemporary needs and issues in a way that truly acknowledges the ecology of the placement setting.

FIELD EXPERIENCE AS A MODEL OF DISEMPOWERMENT

This author asserts that when practica develops in a way that is problematic as previously discussed here, it develops a rigid, ritualised structure often rendering the placement student inert. Disempowerment occurs in that while the field experience appears superficially to upgrade professional independence and confidence, it simultaneously denies the student freedom to choose, control and structure work to any serious degree.

The main power block in this dysfunctional system consists equally of the host supervisor and early childhood lecturer. That is, together they present a single dominating influence. They may remain either as two separate forces between whom there is little or no active partnership, or there may be intermittent degrees of collaboration between them. This power base in time becomes an instrument of social control over the student as manifested by its one way pattern of interaction and influence. Hence, although three parties are involved which should constitute a triadic pattern of interaction, the way in which they actually relate and work represents a dyadic relationship.

Let us now consider more closely the process of disempowerment.

Power is an energy that is generated through complex interactions which occur in social settings and through social networks. As such it is a generative process and not a static entity. (Hence the suitability of ecological theory for analysing this process.) Dyadic relationships generate power when both parties become interpreted selectively by others as differences that exist according to the logic of a

hierarchy (Plumwood, 1990). This means the differences automatically become stratified and hence have additive or subtractive value as movement occurs from one point of the dyad to the other. In this way one entity presents as being 'better' than the other one. Due to the fact that the dyadic process does not allow for other elements to participate, the 'better' entity habitually maintains its dominance and thus becomes legitimised. This is further reinforced by the fact that in dyadic relationships, neither of the two entities have the necessary qualities needed to make a true blend possible (Simmell, 1971) because they equally reflect opposing characteristics.

This means that the situation cannot be fixed merely by attempting to reverse some attributes of the dichotomy, such as by claiming that in future, students in field placements will be given greater autonomy. As each opposing entity in the dyad represents a logical distortion of each other, it simply is not in the nature of a dyad to blend. Consider the following examples - black:white, science:art, leader:slave, teacher:learner. Consequently, if change and progress are to occur, critical analysis of this model of disempowerment would need to be directed towards reconceptualising and redefining the major concepts involved as well as the theoretical relationships between them. This could occur easily enough. For example:

- redefining and asserting the strengths of the field experience student (rather than a preoccupation with his/her inadequacies).
- redefining and asserting the freedoms and rights implicit therein.
- redefining the implicit and explicit purposes of each field experience throughout the course (and it should be expected that these will differ) and debating these.
- reinterpreting the roles of host supervisor and early childhood lecturer by way of noting the common ground they share with the student. This should also include redefining their work with the student as supportive and collaborative rather than controlling and sanctioning.

The pragmatic problems inherent in traditional field experience programs and the consequences of renegotiating them are many and varied. It is not possible or necessary within this chapter to address them as they are being addressed elsewhere (Edwards, 1990; MacNaughton and Clyde, 1990; Veale, 1989). But it is not until such a process does occur that the traditional dominating power block can be fragmented enabling reciprocal and equitable triadic negotiations to occur, which truly reflect attitudinal change, intelligent professional reasoning and an understanding of the 'ecology' of field experiences. Thus the student is freer to be an active and responsible learner and the process of positive professional socialisation is greatly facilitated (Zeichner, 1987).

Considering recent critical moves by the early childhood field towards achieving a publicly recognised professional status (Henderson, 1990a, 1990b; Laing, 1990; Stonehouse, 1989), the continued use of traditional educational practicum models

to any degree represents either a huge and hilarious irony or a viscious practice of hypocritical self abuse. By allowing such processes to continue, we are contributing to the perpetuation of a cycle of learned helplessness in those we are qualifying to enter the field. Is it any wonder then, that individually, as professionals we are still almost renowned for a singular inability to publicly articulate the practices and philosophies underlying our work and also sadly, for a continuing lack of political advocacy on a sustained basis?

CONCLUSION

In these anxious times of forced amalgamations in tertiary education, which includes pressure to rationalise and restructure early childhood courses, our field experience programs, as well as our courses generally, are under serious threat.

To survive we need to become constructive opportunists more cognisant of changing future goals and therefore more able to capitalise on changes that occur, rather than remain as passive and negative reactors to change. Scott (1982:196) claims that we need to do more than just react to threat as "merely reacting against negative possibilities instead of initiating positive ones does not take a field of work forward".

Considering this, we must view the current climate of change as a time to intelligently question some of our old and static early childhood traditions and develop new and exciting ways of progressing towards new and exciting goals.

We could, for instance, begin by asking ourselves some questions like those that follow:

- We always lament that there is never enough field experience in our courses. Is 'more' the answer? The underlying assumption here is that 'more' equals 'improved'. Does it?
- Field experience programs have become an entrenched habit whereby blocks of time are usually spent in field placements often for minimum periods of three consecutive weeks, once or twice during each year of training. But is this practice mode relevant to the dynamics of the early childhood field, or contemporary course structures?
- Has the traditional practicum role of the visiting early childhood lecturer become somewhat superfluous? What alternatives might there be?
- It appears that for preservice students, professional socialisation is a developmental process (Fuller, 1970). If so, why are our practica in each year of study often just 'more of the same'? Why do they not differ substantially in overall focus, specific orientations (for example it could well be expected that final year students

have a higher orientation towards resource/support work with families, administration and staff leadership), type of experience (working as an aide to a children's services advisor for a week instead of teaching) and so on!

- In developing field experience programs that are more responsive to the early childhood field, we may need to consider including in built components that take responsibility for the practicum related inservice support of host supervisors. The need to reconceptualise old assumptions and traditions concerning the role of host supervisors and to then redefine these, in the light of a more active, collaborative role, is long overdue.

These and many other questions must be addressed. More so when one considers that at the moment, the most likely professional influence that many field experience programs have for early childhood students, is to lead them away from experiencing and believing in their own professionalism.

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CHAPTER 11

PRACTICAL CURRICULUM THEORY: DESCRIBING, INFORMING AND IMPROVING EARLY CHILDHOOD PRACTICES

Gail Halliwell

What knowledge is held and used by experienced teachers of young children to inform their curriculum work? It is argued in this chapter that collaborative research, involving teacher practitioners, provides a starting point to building useful theories for describing, informing and improving practice in care and education settings.

The variety of services and settings within which teachers design and implement curriculum for groups of young children and their families continues to expand. Yet too little attention is directed to learning from practitioners what knowledge they have about maintaining early childhood curriculum practices in the places where they work. It is argued in this paper that collaborative research, involving teacher practitioners, provides a starting point to building theories which will be useful for describing, informing and improving practice in current care and education settings.

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THINKING AND TALKING ABOUT CURRICULUM

There is remarkable coyness among some workers in the field of early childhood education in Australia as elsewhere, about the term 'curriculum', and the idea that we 'teach' children, even 'educate' them. The reasons appear to be mainly philosophical, values and beliefs which orientate thinking towards nature, natural development and childhood innocence. 'Rousseau's Emile', growing and developing in commune with nature and far from the evils of the social world, continues to have romantic appeal for many concerned about the well-being of young children in Australia. The appeal continues despite concerns expressed from time to time that emphasis on individuals and individuality may result in inappropriate curriculum, inappropriate in the social contexts of the child's current and future life (Brennan and O'Donnell, 1986; Boomer, 1987).

This romantic orientation is often treated as the antithesis of what Kohlberg and Mayer (1972) referred to as a "cultural transmission stream of thought", where education, teaching and curriculum tends to be associated with practices which involve fragmentation in what is taught, when and why and imposition on learners by teachers. Curriculum theories associated with cultural transmission tend to assume the need for distinctions among a seemingly infinite number of hierarchically organised components. There are distinctions between goals, aims, long-term objectives, short-term objectives, for instance, and between key concepts, major concepts, minor concepts, topics, themes, facts, principles and so on. Diagrams used to explain the components and links, very often show separate boxes, with arrows depicting how higher and lower level components are linked.

Even early childhood workers who are proud to use the terms 'education', 'teaching' and 'curriculum' find these types of curriculum theorising minimally useful for informing practice. For many early childhood educators in Australia, the curriculum has much to do with the quality of connections the child makes between learnings achieved now and those made in other places and at other times. It is also about creating relationships where teachers and learners share decisions

about the learning program and have shared goals for what is to be achieved. When curriculum theorists think and talk as though teacher/learner relationships are always about teachers 'having' control over learners and 'giving' some of that control to learners, it is extremely difficult to bring into the discourse the view that education can take place within relationships of mutuality, reciprocity and a reaching out to be responsive to the other (Greene, 1988).

Early childhood teachers find it extremely difficult to describe their curriculum work, when the language for communicating focuses on differences among parts, not on how parts function within the whole and on degrees of control, rather than the quality of teacher/learner relationships. A different language of curriculum is required involving different clusters of meaning (Halliwell, 1990a). Where diagrams are used to describe a way of thinking about curriculum, they can reflect the 'organic whole' that Schwab (1969) considered to be the foundation for theorising about practice. Perhaps overlapping circles or whirlpools fit better than boxes and arrows? In place of hierarchies such as goals, then aims, then objectives, might be the notion of aims (or goals or objectives, the distinctions are not important) contained in the means for achieving them and of learners selecting in personally meaningful ways from the whole of the experience of living.

Rather than engage in constructing curriculum theories which develop these notions more fully, early childhood educators have looked to other knowledge sources for describing good practices, informing the thinking of novice teachers and improving ongoing practice. In the 1980s the field has extended further than ever before the application of child development theory for these purposes. The rhetoric of developmentally appropriate practice has become central to efforts to share the thinking of the field with novice teachers, parents, policy makers and others. The literature abounds with reports on research into aspects of development and implications for practice, though only some of this research helps teachers maintain their focus on the whole, within which parts can be understood.

The increasing emphasis on conveying to teachers presumed links between developmental theories with valued early childhood education practices may be resulting in a too restricted knowledge base for teachers in their work with young children. There is concern among writers such as Ott, Zeichner and Price (1990), Spodek (1988), Silin (1987) and Fein and Schwartz (1982) that the field is accepting abstract theorising, the search for laws and generalisation characteristic of technical theory, as a substitute for theorising about practice (Fein and Schwartz, 1982:83). Most of the writers share a concern that little attention is being given to building on what the experienced practitioner knows about working with young children in early childhood settings.

In Australia, there is all too little attention being given to studying the knowledge constructed and used by our experienced early childhood teachers and using this to understand and improve ongoing practice. Comparative studies, where the

perspectives of the researchers are brought to bear on the work of teachers, are more common than collaborative studies where practitioner perspectives on their own work is sought. The considerable knowledge residing among our many experienced teachers is tapped less often these days and our theorising about practice is poorer as a result.

It is time to begin seeking out research approaches which can be used to bring together the expertise of researchers and of practitioners, in building theories of practice.

PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE AND THE CURRICULUM WORK OF TEACHERS

Even when they are reticent about use of the word 'curriculum', teachers working with young children make plans and carry them out with the intention that the results will be beneficial for children. They decide how to organise the setting where children are cared for and educated. They select certain resources and reject others, arrange spaces and routines and decide the types of relationships they want to encourage among children and between adults and children. Depending on their personal philosophies and the images, principles and rules they hold, they may arrange time for observing children and talking with parents. They may favour flexible planning so that they can be responsive to emerging interests and individual abilities among children. These decisions of teachers, under modification and adaptation from day-to-day, provide the ongoing curriculum from which children learn.

Bussis, Chittenden and Amarel (1976:49) used this perspective on curriculum when they studied the curriculum constructs in use among a group of elementary teachers in the United States:

> Most people interpret curriculum as meaning 'logical organization of subject matter'. It seems obvious, however, that neither teachers nor children encounter this conception of curriculum in the classroom. What they do encounter is each other, materials, activity, and a particular physical setting (ie, an arrangement of equipment and furniture). All of these, plus the school at large and the outside environment, represent potential resources at the teacher's disposal. How and whether a person perceives these as instructional resources, and what learnings they are perceived to promote, determine the nature of an individual's 'curriculum construct system'.

These researchers investigated the knowledge held and used by teachers who considered that their curriculum work was informed by open education principles.

On the basis of the findings of their study the researchers suggested that practitioners hold knowledge at varying levels, some deeply embedded and informing all other levels. The way they held their knowledge enabled the teachers to make decisions informed by educational goals and values yet having the flexibility and spontaneity necessary for being responsive to unexpected interests emerging among learners. The forms and processes for using knowledge had little correspondence with the linear forms in use among those designing curriculum resources to inform and improve the work of teachers.

Research such as the above, into teachers' curriculum constructs and theories-in-use, excited interest among some theorists interested in improving curriculum practice. In the 1980s there has been an upsurge of interest in studying teacher thinking and in mapping the practitioners' knowledge base. The results are becoming evident in excitingly different ways of thinking and talking about the curriculum work of teachers. An important example is the recent text by Connelly and Clandinin (1988), *Teachers as Curriculum Planners: Narratives of Experience*. It is difficult to explain the book in a few lines, though the foreword by Elliott Eisner may indicate to the reader the promise it holds for describing, informing and improving practice in early childhood education. Eisner (1988:x) says:

> ...this book provides us with a reminder that it is more important to understand what people experience than to focus simply on what they do. It is possible to get teachers and students to perform, and at the same time to scuttle any interest in what they teach and learn. It is possible to develop observation schedules for rating teacher and pupil behaviour with perfect reliability and yet miss most of what counts in their lives - what they make of what they are doing.

This work builds on research such as the studies by Elbaz (1983) and Clandinin (1986), which map ways in which the practical knowledge of teachers is constructed and used to inform curriculum action. Their concept of teacher images provides a useful way of investigating how it is that teachers can manage to maintain direction in their work, remaining responsive to many conflicting and ambiguous factors in curriculum work and linking current action with so many facets of their personal lives and the lives of the children they teach. Clandinin and Connelly (1988:60) describe images thus:

> By image we mean something within our experience, embodied in us as persons and expressed and enacted in our practices and actions. Situations call forth our images from our narratives of experience, and these images are available to use as guides to future action... images are part of our past, called forth by situations in which we act in the present, and are guides to our future. Images as they are embodied in us entail emotion, morality, and aesthetics.

In a recent collaborative study with experienced teachers of young children, I used this notion of teacher images in a study involving mapping the knowledge held and used by two teachers. The study provided insight into similarities and differences

among teachers interested in child responsive curriculum, in the ways their thought patterns clustered together values, beliefs and principles, which then activated strategies to inform decision making.

TEACHER IMAGES AND CHILD RESPONSIVE CURRICULUM

In 1990, I worked collaboratively with Kate and Wendy, seeking to describe their experiences as they worked to introduce and maintain child responsive curriculum practices. The teachers had been transferred into new teaching situations, Kate assigned to work with 6 year olds in a large school at the edge of a city and Wendy with 5 year olds in a smaller country school. I made weekly visits to each school throughout the year, working as a participant observer in the classroom and recording conversations with each teacher. We had agreed to collaborate in documenting the use of practical knowledge to maintain a child responsive curriculum in a new work situation. Kate had taught young children in primary schools for 17 years and Wendy, after 7 years in the preschool sector of the system, was seeking to bring her preschool teaching knowledge into a primary school setting.

Kate and Wendy had access to information about Clandinin's (1986) research and as we talked about their experiences, we explored the idea that they held images which gave shape to their decision making. This investigation proved to be exciting for all three of us, helping the outsider gain insight into why certain dilemmas arose in deciding the ongoing curriculum and helping both Kate and Wendy bring into consciousness the ways they held and used their embedded practical knowledge.

For instance, a little reflection on Kate's part elicited the notion of "children creating meaning" as an image shaping her current attempts to make changes she felt would increase child responsiveness in the curriculum. This image was under construction as she tried out ideas derived from her studies in language and linguistics in the classroom. Some practices that she tried to bring into her work proved to be quite unsatisfactory from her point of view, though she was unable to put into words why this was so.

Over some months we came to the conclusion that many of her feelings of uncertainty were related to a much more deeply embedded image, of "a community where everyone is valued". This image shaped her attempts to ensure that every child in the class felt the equal of all others, that everyone was recognised as having some special talents. Over many years she had devised routines to ensure that children learned to relate to one another in caring ways and learned to know about one another as people who had special talents. This community image was

deeply embedded in the way she judged the success of her work in the classroom. (It also shaped her relationship with other people. Kate yearned for a world where everyone related to one another as equals.)

Some of the practices encountered through her reading about early literacy learning tended to lead into practices which were so much focused on the individual, that Kate felt she was losing the sense of a community where everyone was valued. Once she became clearer about how this image shaped her work, she felt better able to select from possibilities for change so as to protect this old and highly valued image, while bringing into being a classroom where children's efforts to make meaning in personal ways, could be celebrated.

Wendy became very much aware of the importance of images she had developed during her preschool work, when actions associated with these images came into collision with the routines and rules of her new teaching situation. She expressed frustration about her inability to achieve "a flow in learning" because there were so many unpredictable interruptions in school life. She put an enormous amount of effort into creating routines which led to children having a sense that they "owned the room", even though this was not an accepted notion in the school and resources were not designed to support this notion. As the year progressed she suffered increasing tension because her image of "teaching as team work" did not appear to have any place in the school. She could not achieve a feeling of working in a team with the administration, with her staff colleagues or even, it seemed in her lowest moments, with the children.

Our conversations helped her to bring into consciousness the sources of her dilemmas about deciding appropriate action and to work out whether her images could inform her work in this situation in the future. The collaboration helped me to gain insight into her thinking, into the way her "flow in learning" image together with the image of children "owning the room", provided a means of keeping order without having to resort to typical school control strategies of rewarding approved behaviour and completed tasks.

I could begin to envisage what a theory of practice might be like if enough research attention was given to investigating the images in use among teachers seeking to be responsive to young learners.

BUILDING PRACTICAL THEORY WITH KATE AND WENDY

In my work with Kate and Wendy it was evident, quite early in the year, that both teachers began to feel guilty when the ongoing curriculum did not take the directions they had envisaged. When they were not apologising to me about lack

of progress, they were attempting to explain why they had taken particular decisions. They found it difficult to avoid saying they were compelled to act in certain ways or to sound as though they were blaming other people for decisions taken, yet this was not the understanding they had or wanted to convey.

They knew in a practical sense, but not in a discursive way, that maintaining desired directions in the curriculum required negotiation, careful deliberation on strategies before taking action and the evolution of direction rather than progress towards a prescribed goal. The theories they knew about for explaining social action were, however, unable to deal with this dialectical way of knowing that it was in part, the result of actions of others and in part, self action which created the ongoing curriculum.

For instance, Kate became involved in complex negotiations with her teaching partner and delayed changes she had intended introducing until her partner was ready, carefully planning ahead to ensure that the changes would only be delayed, not forgotten.

Both teachers negotiated changes from school routines for written planning and were extraordinarily cautious, it seemed from an outsider's perspective, in deliberating before acting to ensure they would secure agreement for planning methods that worked best for them.

Wendy, after putting considerable effort into designing a room where desks were shared and personal belongings were stored in pockets on a wall hanging, reluctantly decided that she needed to agree to the children's expressed desires for a personal desk with their name on it. These were reasonable decisions, given the circumstances, though it was not easy to explain to someone who did not know the situation, why these actions, and not others, were taken.

When we began talking about the inevitability of dilemmas in classroom decision making (Lampert, 1985; Halliwell, 1990b), both Kate and Wendy said that they felt "more relaxed" and "less guilty". We talked often about the dilemmas they experienced, and I introduced ideas I had gleaned from Giddens' (1984) theory of social structuration which suggests a focus on individual motives and reasons in contact with ongoing routines and rules as a basis for understanding action. The notion that there were recurring and often unrecognised patterns in school routines and rules, proved to be useful in teasing out why it sometimes seemed impossible to make the changes Kate or Wendy envisaged. This notion not only alleviated for them some of the guilt associated with thinking that teachers could be and ought to be in control of every aspect of the curriculum in action. It also provided a way of thinking and talking about dilemmas in teacher decision making that moved beyond the particular events and situations of everyday life in schools.

It helped Wendy, for instance, to understand that the seemingly endless interruptions to her daily work were part of the structure of school life. Earlier she had

located her sense of disruption in personal inadequacy, then had become frustrated with the people who caused particular interruptions and later still determined she would find a way to overcome the interruptions so she could bring her image of a "flow in learning" into her work. Once she began looking at how structured routines cut across her attempts to use her images to inform action, she felt better able to understand the sources of interruption. She began to search for strategies for managing the dilemmas associated with fragmentation of time for learning, knowing that interruptions would continue because the patterns were not caused by individual agents. Changing these patterns might be beyond her capabilities as one contributor to the structuring of school life, but finding strategies to ensure that the patterns were only minimally disruptive to her work was possible.

For some years, Kate had been irritated by the way teachers were treated as "staff members" who worked under the "leadership" of school authorities, who may or may not take an interest in her efforts to be child responsive in the classroom. She had tended to think about the dilemmas arising when administrators had different expectations from hers as specific events, located in the actions of particular people. Through our efforts to explain the source of her tension, she began examining the patterned behaviour of many school administrators, shaped by a system which had in the past been highly authoritarian and hierarchically organised. As she began to consider her relations with authority figures from the perspective of these routinised patterns of behaviour, she found she was better able to work out strategies for establishing the relationships of equality she valued and then was better able to negotiate the spaces she needed to pursue child responsive practices.

It was possible, working collaboratively with these two teachers to develop a practical theory for describing, informing and improving their ability to maintain a child responsive curriculum when they encountered patterns of influence in their work context which conflicted with their practical knowledge about how to implement a child responsive curriculum.

BEING PRACTICAL ABOUT THE SOCIAL ASPECTS OF CURRICULUM WORK

The 1980s was a period when governments were accepting some responsibility for funding programs for the group care and education of children under eight years and the variety of care and education programs offered to these children was expanding. With public funding, care and education practices in use with children became subject to influence from an ever-widening range of interest groups. The groups included government policy makers, national lobby groups, local

communities and competing educational interest groups, each group having differing understandings about good practices in caring for and educating young children. These are trends that can be expected to continue as programs for young children become more varied in response to changing needs within the society (Spodek and Saracho, 1990).

Teachers are inevitably involved in responding to these competing expectations as they go about their day-to-day curriculum work, though there is little in the formal knowledge of the field which prepares them for this. Teachers are trained to focus their curriculum decision making on the child and the immediate environment of the child. This sometimes results in teachers acting as though they could conduct their work in a kind of social vacuum. There is little in traditional theorising about the curriculum work of teachers to alert them to the reality that the interests of other stakeholders, policy makers, funding agencies, local communities and competing interest groups, impinge on their work with children in quite subtle ways, as part of the social structure of their work context.

The problems this creates for children and for teachers were raised by Boomer in his address to the national Conference on the First Years of School, held in Sydney in 1986, one of his points being that a very narrow focus on the child could lead to unrealistic teacher expectations and consequent feelings of guilt. As he put it:

> If one has a learning theory without an accompanying social/political theory, one might develop a variety of guilts and desperations. The ideal learning regime can never be achieved. Teachers who have not confronted the ways in which the system both helps and impedes learning, may tend to blame themselves wrongly for shortcomings which are likely to be the result of deep-seated structures and influences in the system. (Boomer, 1987:94)

Lack of knowledge and therefore sensitivity, to the subtle ways in which cultural routines and rules shape decision making may explain, in part, why practices associated with cultural transmission are so often infiltrating the curriculum in use in the early childhood settings of the 1980s and 1990s (Elkind, 1988; Scott, 1982). When curriculum theory treats the cultural context as a benign factor, something that teachers can shape like clay and developmental theory does likewise, it is no wonder that teachers have little sensitivity to the systematic ways in which parent expectations, societal trends, administrative structures and even child enthusiasms engendered by television impinge on their decision making, creating a sense of unwelcome constraint on what ought to be unproblematic. The theories which imply that it is possible for teachers to have complete control over the cultural context in which curriculum operates, leave teachers with a sense of guilt and frustration.

Hatch and Freeman (1988) for instance surveyed teachers, principals and district-level supervisors involved in kindergarten programs in a school district in Ohio. They noted the stress related to a sense of conflict between what the educators were

expected to do and what they believed to be appropriate educational practice. These people felt constrained, not by explicit policies in operation in their school district, but by difficult to explain pressures on their work emanating from parents, published materials, society and even from children and accountability measures in use in the district and state. Hatch and Freeman (1988:147) in response to this evidence of continuing, routinised influences in the cultural context of teachers' work, concluded their report with the plea that:

> ...early childhood educators should be given a measure of trust as the people who best understand the developmental needs of children, and they should be empowered to design and implement programs to meet those needs.

The statement implies a yearning for some mythical situation where teachers can work in unfettered autonomy but this is an unrealistic expectation. The theories of the field should be assisting teachers to become aware of and thus able to work effectively within the routinised expectations and rules of the various sociocultural contexts where they might do their work. They need to use their knowledge of reciprocal and responsive relationships in the curriculum planned for children, to inform their decision making among other stakeholders in the wider context of their work.

This is another reason for constructing practical theories, based on the curriculum work which teachers actually do. We need to know how experienced practitioners have learned to maintain the practices they value, whatever the pressures in place in their work contexts. We need to know about the ways teachers hold and use their knowledge about working in social contexts and to consider how the embedded practical knowledge of teachers could become abstracted from the specific ongoing situations where it is generated, in forms which enable others to learn from their experiences. It could be that the results would be really useful social theory, something that is urgently needed to take the place of highly abstract social theories which are often proposed as useful for informing practical curriculum work.

CONCLUSION

Kate, Wendy and myself discussed our emerging ideas about how they used images to manage dilemmas, within the shared practical knowledge group which had been established as another part of the research project. In this group were teachers who had volunteered to become involved in reflecting on how sharing practical knowledge helped them improve their efforts to implement child responsive curriculum. Within the group each of us was able to sharpen our personal understandings about the sources of the dilemmas faced by teachers in implementing the curriculum. Teachers found it helpful to think of dilemmas occuring at intersections where their own images were in collision with routinised expectations in place in their work place.

We began to identify dilemmas which were common to all the teachers in the group. Similar dilemmas had been identifed among teachers taking part in an earlier study (Halliwell, 1990c). While teachers considered that there were similar dilemma areas, they felt it necessary to affirm that each teacher experienced and managed those dilemmas in personalised ways. We identified a need to pursue a type of theorising which evolved through sharing stories about dilemma situations and extracting meaning in ways which preserved the complexity of experience, yet enabled others to extract meaning which could inform their own practice. Learning how to record practical theories for more general use among other practitioners was seen as a useful goal, though difficult to achieve.

It could be that really useful theory about practice would evolve through collaboration at a number of levels. In this paper, the types of theorising which could take place through sharing insider and outsider perspectives on teacher's classroom work have been explored. The theorising which eventuates when practitioners gather together seeking to improve personal practice through listening to the stories of others, is an area which should not be neglected in the pursuit of theory to be shared when face to face contact is not possible. There are already a number of groups of early childhood educators working on understanding the role of networking and colleagial groups for improving practice (Ott et al, 1990). Perhaps it is time to establish groups like this throughout the Australian early childhood education community.

As we move toward forms of communicating needed when face to face sharing is not possible, we do need to ensure that our theories of practice are grounded in the experiences of teachers and are shared in print and audio-visual forms which reflect the work of practitioners.

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CHAPTER 12

FROM PIAGET TO VYGOTSKY: MOVING INTO A NEW ERA OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Marilyn Fleer

In recent times, Piaget's theory of cognitive development has been questioned. The replication of his research using different methodologies has revealed a number of limitations. When greater importance is placed on the social context, different results are generated. This has raised concern for the suitability of those programs which have been developed from a Piagetian framework. Vygotsky's social construction of learning which takes into account the learner's social context is proving to be an attractive alternative - especially for early childhood education.

INTRODUCTION

Theories of how children think and learn over the past 20 years have been dominated by Piaget's theory of cognitive development. Piaget's impact was recognized not only by practitioners, but by theorists and researchers alike. Bruner (1983:138) expressed the view that Piaget has:

> ...made a tremendous contribution to our understanding of the mind of the child and how it grows, and indeed to our understanding of mind in general...Piaget could be completely wrong in every detail, but he would still have to be reckoned one of the greatest pioneers. This is not to say that he saw it all, for he certainly did not.

Through both observational (earlier work) and experimental (later work) research, Piaget developed a theory of how children acquire and develop knowledge. His work was concerned with systematically describing and explaining the growth and development of intellectual structures and knowledge. His theory consisted of two main developmental processes: assimilation and accommodation. These processes were summarized by Bruner (1983:138).

> The child moves up through stages of growth by dint of some virtually unspecified process of "equilibrium" between assimilation and accommodation - the former a process of shaping experience to fit one's mental schemata, the latter changing one's schemata to fit experience.

Through the systematic and detailed observations of children over time, Piaget identified specific characteristics of children's thinking at different ages. His theory is characterized by four stages of development indexed by chronological age. They include: sensorimotor (birth - 2 years); preoperational (2-6 years); concrete operations (6-12 years) and formal operations (12 years onwards) (Wadsworth, 1989).

However, the accuracy and relevance of Piaget's theory has in recent time been debated. The array of studies conducted by Piaget and his colleagues (Piaget, 1929, 1952; Piaget and Inhelder, 1956, 1969) which were widely acknowledged and so influential in curriculum development, teaching pedagogy and research itself, have been replicated. With the introduction of different methodologies, the studies have generated conflicting data (Wood, 1988). This chapter will reappraise current early childhood curricula and practice through briefly outlining these studies, introduce an alternative theory which is gaining wide acceptance - **the social construction of learning** - and present research to support its introduction into early childhood curricula and practice. The importance of adult-child interaction will be debated.

THE DEMISE OF PIAGET'S THEORY OF COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

One element of Piaget's theory which symbolizes the development of children's thinking, is that of egocentric thought. According to Piaget, young children see the world from their own perspective and have difficulty viewing the world from another's perspective. This aspect of his theory was developed as a result of experimentation with young children to determine if they could conceptualize a view other than the one they were seeing.

A model of three mountains was presented to the child. The mountains were each a different colour and had a distinctive feature (either snow, a house or a red cross on the summit). The child was requested to sit directly opposite a doll. The model of the three mountains was then placed between the doll and the child. The child was asked "What does the doll see?" Three versions of the experiment were used. Piaget demonstrated through this experiment that young children were egocentric because they chose the perspective they could see. Children up to the age of eight or nine were usually unable to show the perspective seen by the doll.

Donaldson (1978) and her colleagues (1983) modified Piaget's egocentrism task from mountains and a doll, to a game in which a doll was hidden from a policeman. The game commenced with two dolls (one a boy and the other a policeman*) and two walls forming the image of a cross. The child was asked to "Hide the doll so the policeman cannot find him". Once the rules of the game were established and the child understood the task, a second policeman doll was introduced. The child was then asked to hide the boy doll from the two policeman dolls. The child had to visualize the perspectives of both policeman dolls when hiding the doll.

Donaldson and her colleagues found that of the thirty children between the ages of three-and-a-half and five years, ninety per cent were able to hide the boy doll correctly. When a third policeman doll was introduced, sixty per cent of the three-and-a-half year olds succeeded in the task. Donaldson's work has cast doubts on Piaget's notion of egocentrism. This has been supported elsewhere (Wood, 1988).

> Research by other investigators has fully confirmed that, if children, are given the Piaget 'mountain' task, they do indeed have extreme difficulty with it - but not, it now seems for the reason Piaget suggests. (Donaldson, 1978:23)

Many of Piaget's conversation tasks have also been replicated and modified to make them more meaningful to young children. For example, Light, Buckingham and Roberts (1979) modified the **conservation of volume** task by using a beaker that had a broken, razor-sharp rim. This flaw was shown to the children prior to transferring the fluid into another beaker. A social purpose for the task was

* As named by Donaldson

introduced to the children (pouring the liquid into another beaker because the lip was broken). These researchers re-framed the conservation tasks into a socially meaningful context, so that children could make better sense of what was required of them.

Alternative findings have also been reported for Piaget's classification, number concepts, arithmetic and measurement (Donaldson, Grieve and Pratt, 1983; Light, 1986). Consequently, Wood (1988:45) has suggested that:

> There is now a significant body of opinion which holds that Piaget's methodology and demonstration led him to underestimate or misconstrue the nature of children's thinking.

SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED LEARNING

Concerns about Piaget's cognitive learning theory were initially expressed when his ideas were first introduced because it did not take into account the learners' social context. Indeed it would seem that earlier theoretical positions which attempted to ground an account of cognitive development in the child's social experiences (such as, Mead, 1934; Vygotsky, 1962) were almost totally eclipsed by Piaget's essentially individualistic account of cognitive development.

> ...many developmental psychologists have criticized the picture of the lone child which they consider to underlie the orthodox Piaget model. ...They have observed the role of language and interaction in exploring possible solutions. What in fact happens in such interaction is that the child's own cognitive approach to the problem is challenged, either by peers directly or by parents or teachers 'scaffolding' understanding through pacing of the problem-solving process. These observations have moved developmental psychologists to give much more weight to interaction with others, and to the use of language...the child's development must be mediated by, and stimulated by, interations with others. (Light, 1986:170)

Bruner and Haste (1987:93) have also argued against an individualistic approach to learning by drawing our attention to Vygotsky's views on the social construction of knowledge:

> In the main, we do not construct a reality solely on the basis of private encounters with exemplars of natural states. Most of our approaches to the world are mediated through negotiation with others.

Vygotsky's notion of the social construction of learning has attracted attention among cognitive psychologists (Wertsch, 1985). Vygotsky argued that children are entrenched in social experiences, many of which they participate in or make

use of, but which they do not always understand. These experiences are initially encountered on an interpsychological plane, that is, within the social mores of the particular cultural group. Here children participate in many social activities, such as hand washing before a meal, but do not necessarily understand their purpose. It is only after participating in these social rituals many times, with adult discussion about their purpose, that children begin to understand the reasons for those activities. According to Vygotsky (Wertsch, 1985) these experiences can not be understood at the intrapsychological plane (cognitive understanding) without being socially mediated from within the cultural group.

> ...cognition begins in social situations in which a child shares responsibility for producing a complete performance with an adult. The child does what he or she can, the adult the rest. In this way, practice on components occurs in the context of the full performance. In naturally occurring interactions of this kind, the adult will gradually increase expectations of how much of the full performance the child can be responsible for. (Cazden, 1988:101-102)

The adult and the child **work together** to complete the task which is culturally relevant and has a social purpose. The adult allows the child to complete as much of the task as she/he is able, the adult does the rest. In this social interaction, the adult gives relevant information to the child whilst completing the task with the child. Through this process, knowledge becomes socially constructed. This view of learning is fundamentally different to the framework presented by Piaget.

> Whilst there is evidence favouring the view that one basis for developmental change or learning is cognitive conflict and contradiction (e.g., Glachan and Light, 1982)...far more is involved in effective teaching than simply providing material for the child to 'digest' or activating competing ideas that are already implicit in his [sic] thinking. ...the view that adult and child, working together, can construct new schemes through shared interaction. The potential effect of teaching will prove to be far greater than Piagetian theory allows. What the child develops, in this alternative conceptualization, are not mental operations derived from his [sic] actions on the world but 'concepts' that are jointly constructed through interaction with those who already embody them, together with ways of doing and thinking that are cultural practices, recreated with children through processes of formal and informal teaching.
>
> (Wood, 1986:95)

The notion of learning as a socially constructed process in opposition to the more individualistic orientation of Piaget is now challenging much of our educational practice (Wood, 1986, 1988; Bruner and Haste, 1987; Light, 1986, 1987).

REAPPRAISING EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULA AND PRACTICE

In recent times early childhood practitioners have used the phrase **developmentally appropriate** practice to describe education and care in early childhood. Bredekamp's (1987:2-3) "concept of **developmental appropriateness** has two dimensions: age appropriateness and individual appropriateness. ...Play enables children to progress along the developmental sequence from the sensorimotor intelligence of infancy to preoperational thought in the preschool years, to the concrete operational thinking exhibited by primary children".

David (1990:74) defines this developmental ideology as "curriculum to be structured and sequenced in accordance with the child's psychological and physiological development and learning processes". Yet it is clear from Bredekamp's manual of developmentally appropriate practice, that cognitive development is based on Piaget's theory of cognitive development.

If developmentally appropriate based curriculum has been built upon these theoretical assumptions, which are clearly Piagetian based, then the field of early childhood education needs to re-examine its whole approach to the teaching-learning process. Whilst development should still feature strongly in early childhood curricula, the stage based approach and the assumptions made about children's thinking needs to be reconsidered.

Early childhood practitioners can no longer take for granted curricula and ideologies that base their developmental sequence of cognition on Piaget's theory. The view of the self directed child engaging in a resource rich environment must now be questioned. Sylva, Roy and Painter's (in David, 1990:83) insightful comment reflects this concern:

> If the child stands against the garden fence for ten minutes staring absently around him, [sic], they [teachers] claim he [sic] is learning by observing. If he [sic] repetitively puts dough into balls they say that 'the new baby at home is causing him [sic] to regress and he [sic] needs this simple act'.

These ideological views have led to the de-emphasizing of the teacher's role in cognition and to a blind belief that the child's engagement with materials alone, leads to cognition. Whilst great claims are made of the range of potential learning possible through the exploration of the environment (for example block play fosters mathematical development), research indicates that it is the interaction between the adult and the child in the resource rich environment that advances cognition (David, 1990).

Most preschools and child care centres offer programs that are rich resource based learning environments, however research (Sylva, Roy and Painter, 1980; Mead-

ows and Cashdan, 1988; Hutt, Tyler, Hutt and Christopherson, 1989) indicates that in resource rich environments "children's play was often desultory and brief" (David, 1990:83).

David (1990:83), in her extensive review of the literature, indicates quite clearly that much of this play is repetitive and ludic:

> There was little evidence of adult involvement in extending either conversation or thinking, and the free play curriculum in evidence in most of the settings did not offer enough cognitive challenge or indeed interactions with adults to provide the 'scaffolding' for new learning.

David claims that the crucial element for fostering cognitive development, adult-child interaction, is missing. In simply providing a resource rich environment, with an emphasis on play, particularly non-interventionist play, little attention is given to the role of the adult in that environment. David (1990:83-84) suggests that what should occur is a renewed interest in:

> the dialogue between children and adult, in which learning which has occurred during the exploratory phase becomes the focus of conversation and the teacher can provide whatever the children need to take their learning further, whether that be new or different equipment, questions and ideas, or help with planning an investigation.

When specific interaction between the teacher and the child is considered in a developmentally based curriculum it is clear that the teacher's role is de-emphasized: Bredekamp (1987:7) states that:

> In developmentally appropriate programs, adults:
> 1. provide a rich variety of activities and materials from which to choose...provide opportunities for child-initiated, child-directed practice of skills as a self-chosen activity...

The interaction advocated by Bredekamp (1987:8-12) is presented below. Unfortunately, little importance is placed on the adult's contribution towards active cognitive engagement between the child and the adult.

> A Adults respond quickly and directly to children's needs, desires, and messages and adapt their response to children's differing styles and abilities...
> B Adults provide many varied opportunities for children to communicate...
> C Adults facilitate a child's successful completion of tasks by providing support, focussed attention, physical proximity, and verbal encouragement. Adults recognize that children learn from trial and error and that children's conceptions reflect their developing thoughts...
> D Teachers are alert to signs of undue stress in children's behaviour, and aware of the appropriate stress-reducing activities and techniques...

E Adults facilitate the development of self-esteem by respecting, accepting and comforting children, regardless of the child's behaviour…
F Adults facilitate the development of self-control in children
G Adults are responsible for all children under their supervision at all times and plan for increasing independence as children acquire skills…

The role of the teacher in programs that are Piagetian based has been limited to resource provider within the range of children's interests and assumed developmental competence. When many early childhood programs are examined (for example, Wood, 1986, 1988; Tizard and Hughes, 1984; Meadows and Cashdan, 1988; Hutt, Tyler, Hutt and Christopherson, 1989), it would seem that:

> …the types of interaction workers have with young children seem to indicate that, far from such dialogue being intellectually stimulating, it is often banal and cursory, requiring children to answer closed questions, provide labels and, as one child has put it 'tell the teacher something they already know'.
>
> (David, 1990:115)

These interaction types do not reflect the child's world in its own home context.

In the home environment the child is a part of the adult world. The child's understanding of her/his world is mediated through the adult world - a meaningful context, in which cultural mores are transmitted and given purpose. In the preschool/child care centre, a context is artificially created. The social world of the child is mediated through the teacher, however unlike the home it may be child centred, but not child driven. The teacher decides the type, length and time of interaction. The teacher becomes the questioner and the child the responder - in direct contrast to the home context, where ideally the child initiates and may lead the interaction (for example, questioning to seek information). (Tizard and Hughes, 1984).

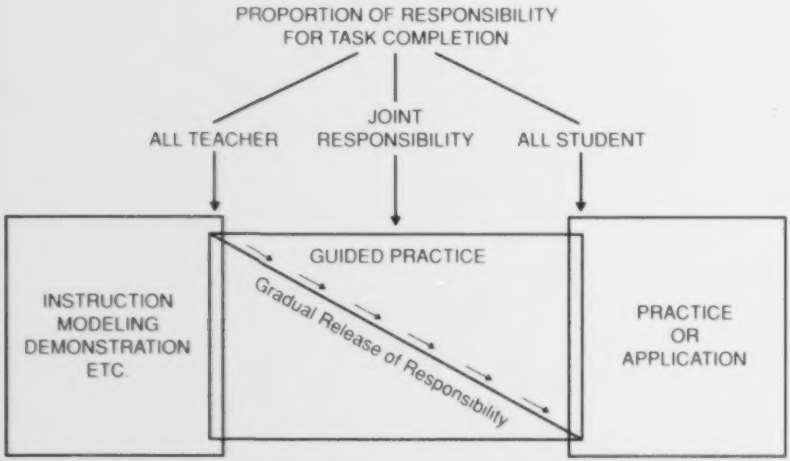
> Wells's studies, in company with research by Tizard and her colleagues (Tizard and Hughes, 1984) suggest that pre-school children tend to initiate interactions, ask questions and seek information more readily at home than school. Much of their 'epistemic' activity is directed towards achieving explanations about facts of everyday life and is occasioned by happenings in the local culture. The parent tends to be in a privileged position in relating to these requests and demands, being a part of that culture. Their practices and talk are embedded in what it is that the child seeks to know…
>
> Thus, the conditions that promote the quest for knowledge from the child are often present in the home and the needs of the child are most likely to be interpretable to those who know them. Conditions for the generation of a contingent learning environment are more likely to be endemic to the home or local culture in a way that they are not to school.
>
> The common teacher response to these difficulties is to initiate and sustain interaction not by showing or telling but by demanding and asking.
>
> (Wood, 1986:204-205)

Teachers create contexts in which they provide children with materials, observe their responses, and attempt to stimulate further development by asking questions (Bredekamp, 1987). Limited instruction, modelling and working together with the child to complete the task occurs. As argued earlier, cognitive development does not naturally unfold devoid of a social context, rather it occurs as a result of teacher-child interaction within a social context which gives it meaning and purpose.

> ...interactions reflect the enactment and shared interpretations and common symbolic representations about events, relationships and goals. Such 'social facts' reflect and also generate the framework within which individual experience is interpreted. (Bruner and Haste, 1987:5-6)

DETAILING EFFECTIVE TEACHER-CHILD INTERACTIONS

The writings of Bruner (1983) on 'scaffolding' have detailed the process of social construction of learning further and allowed for the direct application of Vygotsky's theory into preschool/child care contexts. Cazden points out that this metaphorical term scaffold can be applied to all learning contexts. This process is presented in the following model of the structure of learning environments (Campione, in Pearson and Gallagher; 1983).



Cazden's scaffolding metaphor clearly illustrates the role the teacher should take during the teaching-learning process. Here the teacher does more than simply organize resources and ask questions. The teacher actively models or instructs and assists children based on a shared understanding of their present knowledge. The teaching-learning process is jointly shared to facilitate optimum learning.

In order for the teacher to do this effectively she/he must have a detailed understanding of the child's present cognitive level. The shared understanding about the particular experience is possible through organizing experiences so that children express what they presently know, prior to engaging in the activity.

> We are studying two complex systems that know things: teacher and child. We believe that these two systems are in asymmetrical states, in that the teacher knows more than the child and has responsibility for transferring that knowledge. But the asymmetry is not entirely one-sided. The child also knows things about the world and himself [sic] that the teacher does not know. The desire to make teaching 'relevant', 'learner centred', to 'start where the learner is at' or to be contingent upon their attempts to learn is implicated in most theories of learning and development (Wood, 1980b). Thus, teachers must also seek to understand what the child knows if they are to help develop, extend, clarify and integrate that knowledge. (Wood, 1986:204)

Initially the teacher may take more responsibility for task completion, but over time will relinquish this control and allow the child to take on more of the responsibility as she/he is able. In this way the child works (in collaboration with the teacher) beyond her/his present cognitive ability. Vygotsky presents this process as moving the child through its zone of proximal development (actual potential):

> [The zone of proximal development is] the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.
>
> (Wertsch, 1985:67-68)

This mode of interaction does not preclude opportunities for children to test out their new found knowledge in free play situations on their own or with peers. This time is also needed so that children have opportunities to practice, modify and apply their new understandings and/or skills. It is during these times that the teacher should closely observe the children's competencies so that subsequent teacher-child interactions planned by the teacher actually allow the child to take on more responsibility for task completion.

An emphasis on socially co-astructed learning in early childhood education as outlined above places greater importance upon the role of the teacher in the teaching-learning process. The focus moves from the **child engaging with the**

environment to the **teacher and the child interacting and working together on the learning tasks**. This mode of interaction encourages the child to take on more responsibility for the task and for the teacher to slowly withdraw support.

A study designed to incorporate the social construction of learning in curriculum development and practice in child care, was initiated to determine if, as Vygotsky suggests, children can be moved through their zone of proximal development.

THE STUDY

A group of sixteen children (4 and 5 year olds) were involved in a study which incorporated scaffolding techniques during the teaching-learning process of a series of science based experiences. The science experience was introduced at group time and made available to children during free choice time. On subsequent days the first group time of each day was used for children to share previous learning or for the revision, consolidation or introduction of scientific information. One of the choices on offer to children during free choice time was always the science based experience (a limit of 5 children was set because the science based experience was so popular).

Investigations commenced with the establishment of a shared understanding between the teacher and the children through the children manipulating torches and expressing their understandings/experiences of torches. This teaching-learning context was familiar to the children since most of the children had prior experiences with torches. Consequently a rich and descriptive interchange of ideas took place. The children's ideas were recorded on sheets of paper and subsequently illustrated by them. (These were read during group time on the following day).

This was followed by the teacher and the children working together to understand how the torch worked and later the construction of their own torch using batteries, bulbs and wires. In the course of the interactions between the teacher and the children, a number of child initiated questions arose.

T: I've got something to show you today.
C: Is that a battery?
T: Yes it's a battery.
(Continues for one minute).
C: Could we crack it open with an axe one day?
T: Well actually I did crack a battery open for you if you'd like to have a look at it. Here's the top of the battery. And here's the casing of the battery. It's very messy. See what's inside it? What do you think might be inside it?
C: I think the power's going straight out of it.
T: You think the power's coming out of it when I open it do you?

C: Yes.
C: Can we have a look?
(Children examine battery - interactions continue...)

Within a framework which started with the children's questions, children were moved towards scientific understandings. The teacher modelled the investigation process (based on the children's questions) and over time, the children took on the investigation process themselves. The children connected up the circuit, initally in collaboration with the teacher, but after a period of time, less teacher assistance was given. The children could without difficulty, not only construct their own torch, but modify and extend the experience for themselves. Simultaneously, children were given direct instruction on current flow through, first, the reading of factual books and second, the teacher outlining current flow theory to individuals as they worked with the materials. All children freely expressed the scientist's view of current flow along a simple electric circuit.

Research into this field of study with older children (10-15 years: United Kingdom, New Zealand and the United States of America) indicates that even after lessons (methods not given), only one third of children understand this concept (Cosgrove, Osborne and Carr, 1985). Towards the end of the study described here, the teacher prompted children at group time to express their understandings. In the following transcript it is evident that the children knew and were easily able to share a great deal of their understandings.

PART ONE:

T: We're going to try and think of all the things that we know about batteries and torches and electricity. Do you think you can remember all those things you know?
C: Yes.
C: How much is there?
T: I'm looking for people who can tell me what's inside a torch.
C: Batteries.
C: Wires.
C: Light bulb.
C: A spring.
T: I think that's all.
C: No that thing, the black one up the top.
T: What could we call it? That's the part that attaches to the light bulb. Now, what's inside a battery?
C: Electricity.
T: When we pulled apart the battery what did we see inside it?
C: Black stuff.
T: Yes the black paste.
And what's this part called?

C: Carbon rod.
T: And what's the funny name for this outside part of the battery. *Zzz*?
C: Zinc.
T: That's right there's a zinc case.

In Part Two of the transcript the teacher carefully worked with the children to reconstruct their understandings of current flow in the torch circuitry.

PART TWO:

T: Now who can tell me how the electricity gets from the battery to the light?
C: By the battery.
T: Okay so, the electricity starts in the?
C: Battery.
T: And where does it go?
C: Into the torch.
T: How does it get into the torch?
C: By the wire.
T: So it starts in the battery and goes along, how many wires at once?
C: One.
T: And goes where? It goes from the battery along the wire to?
C: The light bulb.
T: The light bulb, and then where? Here's our picture of it all. It starts in the battery and goes along the wire to the light bulb and then where?
C: Battery.
C: Back to the battery.
C: (E) And it makes it better and puts it away again.

In Party Three of the transcript, it is clear that Elizabeth has understood current conservation, a sophisticated scientific phenomena, normally not fully understood by children or some adults.

PART THREE:

T: What was that Elizabeth?
C: (E) It makes it good again and then puts it back and then throws it away again.
T: Yes the electricity goes round and round in a circuit.
C: (Monica) The part of the torch there is two batteries, a lump on the top and you put the lump on top of the torch or it won't work.
T: Yes, who noticed that when they were playing with torches that you have to have the lumps up or the electricity can't flow through them.
Simon, would you like to read this to us, let's see if it's right?
(Reads from factual text).
T: Is that right?

C: Yes.
T: So it flows around and around in a circle.

At the conclusion of the experiences with the torches (12 sessions over 6 days) and nearly three months later, all of the children were still able to connect up the electric circuit and indicate the scientists' view of current flow.

The adult-child interaction evident throughout the unit on torches focused on extending the children's cognitive understanding of the materials they were manipulating. This was achieved through commencing explorations from within a socially meaningful context, namely torches and moving to an abstract context and understanding (through the use of circuitry materials). This movement in thinking was only possible through the carefully planned and implemented adult-child interaction.

Adult-child interaction throughout the unit featured many of the traditional interaction types such as questioning and procedural interaction. However, what was significant and different to most learning contexts discussed in previous sections, was the greater emphasis placed on joint exploration and task completion and direct instruction (abstract-based) during explorations with the materials. Children were given information that moved them from the concrete to the abstract, in first a concrete context (as they worked with the materials) and later in an abstract context (during group time, when felt board props or circuitry diagrams were used). These information sharing sessions were repeated many times, without loss of interest by the children. The success of this approach is evident in the cognitive attainment of the children as outlined above.

Whilst the emphasis has been on cognitive learning in this chapter, the same principles can be applied to other areas of learning and development in early childhood - physical development (eg. jump rope skipping together; walking a balancing beam together) and social/emotional learning (eg. teacher involvement in dramatic play). The social construction of knowledge as outlined by Vygotsky and Bruner's scaffolding metaphor to illustrate this approach are equally useful for describing the teacher's role in physical and social/emotional development and learning.

CONCLUSION

Reviews of research into adult-child interaction in early childhood contexts and the study presented in this chapter, lend support to the importance of the teacher's role in cognitive development. Children are able to work at higher cognitive levels than Piaget's research and subsequent theory advocated. Within a socially mean-

ingful context that encourages not just a rich resource environment, but extensive adult-child interaction, young children are able to cognitively excel beyond present theoretical expectations which have, unfortunately, become cemented as a basis for early childhood practices.

Sylva (1990:105) has also cautioned early childhood professionals in their total acceptance of Piaget's work and suggests a broadening to include the work of Dweck and Vygotsky.

> To conclude this paper, I've argued that Piagetian theory is still useful, although it is too narrow. There is a need to broaden the developmental theory that guides both EDC programmes as well as their evaluations. Vygotsky (Wertsh, 1985) has shown that children's development within cultures affects their thinking. Dweck [and Leggett, 1988] has stressed the importance of children's beliefs about their own talents; they develop goals which are oriented towards either approval or mastery, and this affects their persistence. *It is here that the theory and research of Vygotsky and Dweck may be useful in planning early education and in evaluating it. This work has not yet been integrated into the curriculum of early education.*

The time is now ripe to reappraise the theoretical underpinnings of early childhood curricula and practice. This is largely due to recent criticisms of Piagetian theory in which he encouraged "a pedagogy which overemphasized the individual at the expense of the social, which undervalues talk as a tool for discovery, and which discourages teachers from making explicit to children the purposes of educational activities and the criteria for success" (Edwards and Mercer, 1987:169-170).

In reviewing the theory that underpins many developmentally based programs, Vygotsky and Bruner offer an alternative psychological approach to learning that can make a powerful contribution to early childhood education in Australia.

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CHAPTER 13

EARLY CHILDHOOD GROWS UP

Anne Stonehouse

Key issues and challenges are identified briefly in this chapter and looked at as manifestations of a developmental progression for the field. Their resolution provides opportunities for positive growth, not only for individual professionals, but for the early childhood profession as a whole.

Parts of this chapter were adapted from an address given in 1990 at the Hobart and Adelaide Lady Gowrie Child Centres in honour of the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Lady Gowrie Child Centres.

The title may not appeal to some people, who view it as demeaning of early childhood, in that it implies previous or current immaturity. On the other hand, it suggests that, just as individuals go through developmental stages, so might the profession. Further it implies positive movement forward, progression towards maturity. There is also the suggestion in the title that the evolution of the profession is not likely to be totally smooth and easy. As is true with children, development is not a steady progression but proceeds unevenly with plateaus and setbacks. It is often a case of 'one step forward, two steps back' and so it is not surprising that when it comes to issues facing the profession, one often has the feeling of 'having been there before'.

There are a number of contemporary issues, some of them generated and fuelled internally, others resulting from forces outside the profession, that impinge not only on the work of early childhood professionals but their status and standing in the broader community as well. This chapter identifies a range of issues and looks at each in terms of the development of the profession, as well as the changing context in which early childhood services and professionals operate. Some steps the profession needs to take to further its own development will be identified.

LOOKING AT OURSELVES

Some detractors and critics of the early childhood profession might accuse members of currently having an unhealthy preoccupation with the profession itself. At most professional gatherings and conferences professional issues are addressed. This may be a developmental stage, a collective adolescence perhaps, or a mid-life crisis involving reflection about identity and the meaning of professional life.

Much of the current debate and discussion is productive, however; endless discussions about who is in the early childhood profession and who is not seem unproductive, elitist and not the best use of energy. An inclusive view of the profession is embodied in the recently adopted Australian Early Childhood Association Code of Ethics (1990), which states that it is an aspirational code, one that it is hoped that **all** people who work with young children and in the interests of young children will embrace. This is in contrast to codes of ethics of some other professions, which attempt to dictate minimum standards for practice, practice below which would constitute negligence.

Similarly, a pre-occupation with professional status may also not be productive. Status is attributed from the outside and like happiness, cannot be pursued directly, but comes as a by-product of other pursuits. While it is definitely productive to address some of the obstacles to the attribution of appropriate status to the

profession – such as lack of valuing and understanding within the broader community, unfavourable working conditions, and the equating of working with young children to mothering, to name a few – the direct pursuit of higher status will be futile.

Professional navel gazing or introspection is no doubt a healthy sign of growth, a necessary stage of development. While it is important to reflect about the profession, self absorption can lead to having little or no energy for the major issues **out there** that impinge on children's lives in a significant way.

CHILD CARE ON THE POLITICAL AGENDA

There is no doubt that child care is high on the political agenda at all levels and that we are at a major crossroads in the Commonwealth Children's Services Program. The fierce debates and lobbying that go on regarding the content of the child care policies of both the major political parties are indications of the high profile of the issues related to the provision of children's services. The extension of fee relief to commercial child care centres, the promise of an accreditation system and the formation of the National Children's Services Advisory Council are all evidence of developmental change and potential progress.

Sebastian (1986:44) has stated:

> Since the earliest developments in Early Childhood Services, we have witnessed the way in which young children and their families have been continually manipulated by the whims and fancies of Governments who have tended to use service provision as agents for varying degrees of social engineering. On the one hand, we have seen how quickly Governments can respond to needs by the provision of children's services when it serves their particular goals or purposes. On the other hand we have also witnessed the withdrawal of finance and even commitment when economic pressures such as unemployment emerge as a major social problem on the community.

Some optimists would say that while those comments may have been valid in the past, they are unrealistic and pessimistic in the present context and that there is now a genuine commitment to children's services. Some would reply that the latter view is naive in the extreme. Time will tell. The current prominence of children's services affords tremendous opportunities, but along with those go the responsibility for advocacy at all levels.

Currently, the provision of children's services is linked to labour market policy, equal opportunity for women and the transition from welfare to employment. Priorities about the supply of children's services, their affordability to parents, and

their quality, compete with each other. This all adds up to a situation where early childhood policy and programs stand not alone, but within the context of other national agendas. Yes, child care is high on the political agenda, but the view of child care is still primarily as a necessary means to achieve some other end, for example, to retain or get women into the work force, to implement an affirmative action policy, to boost the economy and move the country out of recession. The view is **not** that child care is important primarily because the community wants to ensure that children get what they deserve or that families are supported.

The challenge for a maturing profession is to hold fast to its beliefs about what is important, to be willing to compromise when that is needed, to try to understand agendas that are not their own and language that comes from other disciplines and professions and to communicate its own agenda and priorities coherently and convincingly.

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

The tremendous interest in and enthusiasm about the Code of Ethics for the Australian early childhood profession and the recent adoption of a Code by the Australian Early Childhood Association is a reflection of where we are as a profession.

The list of reasons that a Code is needed is itself a statement about the profession.

1. There are *increasing demands made on early childhood workers by parents, funding bodies, management and sponsoring agencies, licensing bodies, and these demands sometimes conflict with each other.* As Katz (1978) says, we are responsible to a number of client groups, whose demands may conflict with each other. Consequently, we may be pulled in different directions. The Code can help us clarify what is most important.
2. We are *working increasingly with people from other disciplines and professions, as well as with people who do not have any formal qualifications.* Their priorities, beliefs about children, and practices may be different from ours. The Code can remind us of our core values, our basic beliefes.
3. *Questions are often raised about the necessity of having people with formal early childhood qualifications in programs for children,* as work with young children is sometimes viewed as just an extension of mothering, with the attitude that just about anybody with patience can do it. The Code is a statement about the complexity of being an effective early childhood professional, and the skills and knowledge needed to carry out the roles effectively.

4. There are constant pressures on early childhood services to become more efficient, to expand, to offer more with fewer resources; consequently, *the quality of services is continually under threat*. The Code helps to remind us of what is most important and cannot be compromised in providing services to young children.

5. In the general community, there is a *lack of understanding of what constitutes good early childhood practice*. The Code is a statement that can be used to educate the community.

6. The *status of early childhood workers is low*. There is questioning both within and outside of the field about the professional standing of early childhood workers – whether, in fact, early childhood is a profession. The existence of the Code should have the effect of raising status, as it is one indicator of being a profession.

7. *Events initiated outside our profession impinge greatly on our work for better or for worse* – for example, mergers of tertiary institutions, the development of traineeships, reviews of licensing, award re-structuring, changes in government policy, re-structuring of government departments and other initiatives taken by governments at all levels, or policies or election promises made by political parties. Early childhood professionals have a responsibility to take a stand, and this leads to a need to be clear about what our stand is, where we will compromise and where we will not. The Code will help to make those decisions.

8. *Divisions exist within the profession*, particularly between those who work in so-called care settings and those who 'teach' in educational settings. In many cases, these divisions are caused by lack of understanding and misconceptions about the nature of the work in different early childhood settings, and imagined or real threats by one group to affect negatively the status of the other. The Code states what is common to all who work in early childhood settings, and so should bring sectors of the profession closer together.

9. The early childhood professional has always had many roles – imparter of knowledge, adviser to parents, curriculum designer, developmental specialist, nurturer, assessor, to name a few. As the needs of families change, changes in the nature of early childhood services will be required. Consequently, early childhood professionals will have to *take on new roles and responsibilities*, and this can cause confusion. No longer is it functional to think of the early childhood professional as someone who works exclusively with children. Weiss (1989), in an article titled "From Missionary to Manager: the Changing Role of the Early Childhood Professional", asserts that one of the problems with the profession is that over the years we have added on new roles without shedding old ones. To illustrate her assertion, she points particularly to the increasing trend for early childhood professionals to work in

managerial and administrative positions. Meeting the challenges of these positions requires skills and knowledge in addition to those gained in traditional early childhood preparation, and presents new types of ethical dilemmas. The way the Code is structured is itself an indication of the many roles played by early childhood professionals: in relation not only to children, but also to families, colleagues, the community, and the profession. The Code itself is a statement about what it means to be an early childhood professional.

10. Finally, there is *a general lack of professional development activities for highly qualified experienced professionals*. Most inservice activities are open to any participants who choose to come, from the inexperienced and unqualified to the very experienced and highly qualified, and are therefore pitched at a middle level. Consequently, they may not meet the professional needs of the latter group. Experienced professionals would be interested in exploring a range of complex issues related to a Code of Ethics. (Stonehouse, 1991:9-11)

If the Code is taken up and used appropriately, then it follows from the above that the Code has the potential to be a powerful tool for the profession in its development in the following ways.

- A guide to the beliefs and values of the early childhood profession and what constitutes professional behaviour.
- When used in inservice education, a basis for early childhood professionals to support each other, to explore solutions to complex questions, to be re-assured that the questions are indeed complex. This in turn will boost morale and strengthen commitment.
- A tool to provoke discussion about many important topics related to good early childhood practice - for example, discipline, parent-staff relationships, responding to individual needs, and teamwork, to name a few.
- A statement about what we all have in common, whatever setting we work in, whatever aged children we work with, whether or not we work directly with children, if we make policy, lecture in a college or university, are administrators, advisory staff; therefore the Code should unite us as a profession.
- A statement for those thinking of entering the profession or studying to be in the profession about the dimensions of being an early childhood professional. It is no longer appropriate for people to enter the profession who are motivated solely by a desire to work mainly alone with a group of young children. The Code is a statement about the multi-faceted role of the early childhood professional, her or his responsibilities to parents, colleagues, the community, the profession, as well as to children. Considerable attention should be given to the Code in courses that prepare early childhood professionals.
- A strong statement to the general community about what the profession stands for and the basis for their practice.

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- A means of raising status, in as much as having a code of ethics is one of the requirements usually listed for being a profession.
- A step towards gaining greater autonomy for the profession, greater control over the quality of the services offered (Feeney and Sysko, 1986). Currently our practice and the operation of our services is heavily controlled and regulated from outside our profession. A Code represents a major step towards greater internal control. (Stonehouse, 1991:15)

It must be stressed that these are **potential** outcomes only. Whether they are realised depends entirely on what the profession does with the Code.

The process of developing a code and then disseminating and explicating it provides opportunities for discussing and working through some of the vexing issues facing the profession as a whole, as well as those facing individuals within the profession. In other words it can be a tool that **promotes** growth of individuals within the profession as well as the profession itself. At the same time the interest in the Code **reflects** individual and corporate professional growth as we contemplate the deeper and broader issues related to our work and develop a means of monitoring our own practice.

ACCREDITATION OF SERVICES

There has been considerable interest in accreditation of early childhood services for some years now and the development of a voluntary accreditation system for children's services has been given high priority by the field. In as much as this topic is treated in detail elsewhere in this book (see chapter by Wangman), here it will be highlighted only as a reflection of the stage of development of the profession. One of the fundamental principles embodied in an accreditation system, as it is being discussed currently, is the notion of the profession regulating itself, having a substantial degree of internal control over its own practice. This in fact is on most lists of criteria for a profession. To date the process of discussing an accreditation system has embodied the principles that it must come from the industry and belong to the industry. The Australian Early Childhood Association, as well as others, have held the strong view that the early childhood profession must play a key role in developing and operating an accreditation system.

THE SHAPE OF PRESERVICE EDUCATION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

Mergers of tertiary institutions, rationalising of courses, generic teacher preparation, moves to develop competency based standards, the push for recognition of prior learning, the changing face of TAFE and the development of traineeships in child care, constitute a significant challenge to the early childhood field. Preservice education is yet another area where there must be one voice from the profession.

The recent mergers of colleges of advanced education and universities and the consequent relative loss of autonomy in some early childhood preparation courses have precipitated concern within the field. There is great fear that the integrity of the preparation to work in early childhood services has been, or will be, compromised severely as courses are rationalised and decisions are made by people with little understanding of and affinity for the discipline of early childhood.

There are those who believe that the survival of the profession depends on retaining control and remaining separate. There are others who would argue that the separateness of the early childhood field historically has been its greatest strength and its greatest weakness. It may be that the lack of understanding, for example, of primary educators about early childhood and the relatively small influence that early childhood doctrine has had on primary education, is in part a legacy of the separateness of the training institutions. A more optimistic view would suggest that the opportunities offered by the amalgamations of early childhood tertiary training institutions into universities should be taken advantage of. The opportunities are several. University status brings pressure to conduct research, and the research base in early childhood needs strengthening. Secondly, there is now greater necessity and more opportunities to educate colleagues who work in related disciplines about the unique aspects of the discipline of early childhood as well as the commonalities. Thirdly, there will be opportunities to share early childhood expertise with students in related fields. Fourthly, there are opportunities to work collaboratively with people from related disciplines (Stonehouse, 1990).

The situation with regard to the preparation to work in early childhood programs is another example of early childhood being in the 'bigger arena'. The challenge is to be clear about the ways in which early childhood philosophy and ideology are unique and to ensure that these aspects are conveyed to those preparing to become members of the profession. Positive growth will have occurred for the profession when it can acknowledge commonalities with teaching at other levels and with other human service professions, along with being clear about its unique features.

INDUSTRIAL ISSUES

It is widely acknowledged that early childhood personnel cannot do a good job with children unless their needs are met. Caldwell (1987:30) identifies the guilt, conflict and discomfort that early childhood personnel feel when advocating for better working conditions and higher wages.

> What is good for personnel in this field will indeed be good for children and families; and we should never lose sight of that fact. We need not feel guilty about advocacy efforts that benefit us…In short, there can be no effective advocacy for children without including advocacy for those who help care for and educate them.

A positive sign of maturing is that increasingly, early childhood professionals have come to terms with the need for industrialisation and do not see it as a threat or as antithetical to professionalisation.

THE ARTIFICIAL DICHOTOMY BETWEEN CARE AND EDUCATION

Unfortunately no list would be complete without this item. What an overused cliche! It will be a wonderful day when it is no longer necessary to list it among the challenges faced, not only in services, but sadly within the profession as well.

> …[T]he current terminology used to distinguish care and education staff and settings may impede community and government understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of early childhood services. (Rodd, 1989:47)

The frequency and intensity with which early childhood professionals continue to attach significance to those labels is both surprising and disappointing. Rodd (1989:47) goes on to say, as have many others, that it is no longer appropriate to train people to work with a particular client group or in a particular setting or for a particular role.

> Eliminating the perhaps minor differences and highlighting the more important common elements which are found in the aims and objectives of the services provided for young children and their families is likely to produce a move towards greater public understanding and acceptance of the early childhood professional and services provided.

The dichotomy has been fuelled by lack of understanding of different program types, inferred threats to status and conditions, confusion about purposes of different services and inequities in working conditions. The divisiveness has

weakened the profession's ability to advocate effectively, not only for children, but for itself as well. The elimination of the dichotomy would be a sign of significant maturing.

THE CONTEXT

Early childhood issues were described briefly above, but what the profession must come to terms with is the larger context in which those issues exist. Ebbeck (1989) lists the economic crisis and its many implications for families, the multicultural nature of our population and increasing concern about our environment and reversing the damage done each day to our physical world, as some of the factors that impinge substantially on our work with children. She asserts that a child-centred approach is no longer appropriate in early childhood services, but that we must know each child in the context of the family and each family in the context of the immediate community and the larger society in which it functions.

Watts (1987:9), speaking to kindergarten teachers about changes in early childhood services, also listed contextual issues that need consideration by early childhood professionals.

1. The rapidly changing **social and technological environment**, the employment/unemployment patterns that prevail, the extent of poverty, changing family structures and life styles.
2. The growing diversity among users of early childhood services.
3. The increasing placement of children in **multiple early childhood services.**
4. The **complementary roles and responsibilities of parents and early childhood educators.**

Not all of those factors are totally problematic or undesirable. For example, the cultural and linguistic richness of our communities, while it presents challenges, is also a wonderfully enriching dimension for early childhood programs. However, they do represent a shifting context.

Looking at young children in the larger context suggests that early childhood professionals cannot view themselves as the repositories of all knowledge and skills needed to solve the problems facing families and young children. Early childhood professionals are sometimes accused of being a bit 'precious' and 'purist' about the knowledge and perspectives they have about children. Whether or not those are fair criticisms, it is critical that early childhood professionals join with others who are also concerned about the needs and rights of young children and that they be willing to compromise and to entertain perspectives other than

their own. This is one way, as was mentioned previously, where a code of ethics can be helpful, in assisting members of the profession to decide where and where not to compromise.

ADVOCACY

Early childhood professionals must do a more aggressive marketing job to sell quality of life issues for children to the public. I do not mean a saccharine sweet approach or an 'aren't they cute and funny and don't they say the darnedest things' approach, but rather a 'hard sell' about why it is worth doing our best for children and perhaps more importantly, what constitutes doing the best for them; for example, that it is not early structured teaching of letters or numbers or designer clothes or so-called educational toys or spending years of their lives in less than adequate care programs.

Numbers of people have been saying for some time now that at many levels and in spite of cliches and 'ads' on television, we as a nation do not value children in a respectful and meaningful way. Katz (1990:4), as she so often does, expresses this concept eloquently.

> I really believe that each of us must come to care about everyone else's children. We must come to see that the welfare of our children and grandchildren is intimately linked to the welfare of all other people's children. After all, when one of our children needs life saving surgery, someone else's child will perform it. If one of our children is threatened or harmed by violence, someone else's child will be responsible for the violent act. The good life for our own children can only be secured if a good life is also secured for all other people's children. Where are other people's children right now? Are they having wholesome, caring, and appropriate experiences? The person who will be our [Prime Minister] [I am certain Katz would allow that use of the Australian equivalent of President] 60 years from now may be in someone's three year old class today. I hope she is having a good experience! To be concerned about other people's children is not just a practical matter - it is a moral and ethical one.

Only when the status of children is raised will the status of the early childhood profession be elevated.

Not everyone needs to be adept at political advocacy. One important type of advocacy is personal advocacy, or one to one advocacy (Caldwell, 1987). Students in child care or early childhood courses often experience incredulousness on the part of friends and acquaintances that they are studying for two or even three whole years to learn to work with young children - 'However would you fill up that

much time!" is the common reaction. This affords opportunities for personal advocacy. When it is thought of as an important form of advocacy, students and others become increasingly enthusiastic about talking to people about children's needs and rights and children's services, much to the chagrin, no doubt, of their friends and acquaintances and the tradespeople they attempt to convert.

Goffin (1988) makes the point that early childhood workers are undertaking advocacy whenever they work effectively with parents in their programs, when they invite parents in, both figuratively and literally and convey to them their importance in their children's lives. She adds that this constitutes modelling at a service level the relationship that should exist between families and the community, the notion that the community has a responsibility to support parents to carry out their nurturing role.

There is also, in addition to personal advocacy, informational advocacy, which Caldwell (1987:31) defines as "attempts to raise the general consciousness of the public both about the importance of events that occur during the early childhood period and about the capacity of quality programs to foster growth and development and to strengthen families".

Undertaking advocacy in its diverse forms is a sign of maturing of the profession also.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONALS

The development of the profession has significant parallels with the development of individual professionals. There are numerous lists describing the characteristics of professionals. The particular characteristics needed by members of the early childhood profession currently, are as follows.

1. A view of oneself as a life long learner, as needing to continually update and expand one's knowledge and skills.
2. Substantial commitment to one's work.
3. A growing interest in the broader issues that impact on one's work, as opposed to a narrow focus on the particular work one does.
4. Openness, a willingness to contemplate points of view other than one's own.
5. Clarity about the limits of one's own expertise.
6. The ability to articulate rationally, dispassionately.
7. A commitment to advocacy.

The development of the profession depends on the development of the people within it.

CONCLUSION

The context in which early childhood professionals operate as we approach the 21st century is unique and yes, it is changing, but one of the hallmarks of a professional is that there are no pat solutions and no formulae to apply to one's work. In spite of the challenges, early childhood professionals have reason to feel optimistic about the future, as many of the challenges reflect a developmental process for the profession.

The profession needs to do more than reflect changes in society or react to them; rather it must affect and effect the innovations and changes, help set the agenda. There is a non-trivial distinction between issues related to children being on the political agenda and children being on the political agenda. The former has been achieved but not the latter.

The profession needs the ability to change with the times and at the same time stand firm about those things that are timeless. Development resembles a journey, and so this chapter might also be titled "Where Are We? Where Are We Going? How Do We Get There?" In answer to those questions, the early childhood profession in Australia has always been clear and strong about wanting what is good for children and while details may be argued, members of the profession would agree about the essentials.

There are many expressions of what constitutes the essentials, but a particularly good statement is that in the Credo for Bank Street College written by the founder, Lucy Sprague Mitchell, in 1916. One of its strengths is that it aplies to children, to parents and to early childhood professionals.

CREDO FOR BANK STREET

What potentialities in human beings - children, teachers, and ourselves - do we want to see develop?

- A zest for living that comes from taking in the world with all five senses alert.
- Lively intellectual curiosities that turn the world into an exciting laboratory and keep one forever a learner.
- Flexibility when confronted with change and ability to relinquish patterns that no longer fit the present.
- The courage to work unafraid and efficiently, in a world of new needs, new problems, and new ideas.
- Gentleness combined with justice in passing judgments on other human beings.
- Sensitivity, not only to the external formal rights of the "other fellow" but to him as another human being seeking a good life through his own standards.

- A striving to live democratically, in and out of schools, as the best way to advance our concept.

Our credo demands ethical standards as well as scientific attitudes. Our work is based on faith that human beings can improve the society they have created.
(Mitchell, in Cenedella, nd:np)

The Australian early childhood profession is growing up. This chapter has asserted that growing up is an ongoing process that involves both changing and staying the same. So many of the crucial issues faced by the profession currently require wisdom about when to strive to stay the same, to remain as is and when and how to change. The challenge is to take what is valued by the profession and apply it wisely to the context.

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CHAPTER 14

DILEMMAS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER EDUCATION: AN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

Lilian Katz

This chapter suggests that all teacher educators confront at least six fundamental dilemmas that must be addressed in decisions about the design and implementation of teacher education courses. Each dilemma and ways of addressing it, is discussed in terms of a variety of inevitable conflicts.

*The ideas discussed in this chapter were developed with the invaluable assistance of Professor James D. Raths.

Many groups have an interest in the preparation of teachers for early childhood education: national government bodies, local educational authorities, heads and teachers in the receiving schools and their clients, teacher educators and the candidates themselves. Each of these groups is known to complain that teacher education has little if any impact on students. Graduates often characterise their experience of teacher education as less than satisfying and of little practical value. Each group probably has expectations of what teacher education should accomplish and its own explanations for why it appears to fall short much of the time.

In this chapter, some of the major issues of concern to groups who have a stake in early childhood teacher education are discussed in terms of six dilemmas that may be generic to all teacher education. The argument is that these dilemmas help to account for both the low level of impact and the high level of dissatisfaction attributed to teacher education. The argument begins with a definition of a dilemma and is followed with discussions of six dilemmas that seem to be inherent in the education of teachers of young children.

DEFINITION OF A DILEMMA

The term dilemma is used to refer to a predicament which has two main features. First, it involves a choice between at least two alternative courses of action that are equally problematic. Second, it involves a predicament in which the choice of one of the alternatives sacrifices the advantages that might accrue if the other alternative were chosen (Room, 1985). That is to say, if we choose A, the advantages inherent in alternative B will be forfeited and vice versa.

It is assumed further, that each of the two 'horns' of the dilemma, A and B, carry with them their own errors; alternative A involves certain errors as does alternative B; error-free alternatives are not really available. In principle, each of the available alternatives involves 'a choice of error'. Thus part of our task is to determine which error is preferred in each predicament.

DILEMMA NO 1: COVERAGE VERSUS MASTERY

According to Westbury (1973), all teachers face conflicting pressures concerning the extent to which they should emphasise **coverage** versus **mastery** of the content and skills to be learned. In this sense, all teachers, at every level, are pulled in opposite directions: the more covered, the less mastered and vice versa. We cannot do equal justice to both coverage and mastery.

Teacher educators are under constant pressure to expand the curriculum to cover more content and skills. Rarely are proposals put forward to drop a component of a course, although some US educational reform proposals advocate dropping coverage of professional studies topics. Typically reformers advocate greater coverage of liberal studies, partly hoping to ensure a 'well educated' graduate and partly to improve teachers' mastery of what they are to teach. To some extent the Holmes Group's (1986) advocacy of a fifth year for teacher education students is intended to ensure greater coverage of the educational research literature as part of improving the professional status of teaching.

Some pressure to expand content coverage also comes from within teacher education. Teacher educators want to expand coverage to include sensitizing students to minority cultures, cultural diversity, gender stereotyping, mainstreaming and special education issues. In the field of early childhood, topics concerning relationships between teachers and parents, parent education and involvement are also competing for coverage.

ADVANTAGES OF EMPHASISING COVERAGE One of the special features of early childhood education is that it is not organised around instruction in discrete academic disciplines or subject matter. In principle, the younger the child, the more integrated the curriculum should be. Thus, emphasis on coverage should help equip students to become generalists with a wide range of knowledge and skills.

Furthermore, since graduates are likely to be employed in a wide variety of settings (more so than primary school teachers) it is difficult to establish what knowledge and which skills absolutely must be covered. The preferred error in this case would seem to be to cover as much as possible to prepare for the diversity of children and communities in which graduates might be employed.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE EMPHASISING COVERAGE The main disadvantage to choosing coverage versus mastery is that the teacher education course becomes a 'smattering' approach. What is presented may indeed be learned, but probably not mastered sufficiently to be retrieved later under 'fire in the trenches'. This approach is likely to have little impact on the student's subsequent professional competence.

In addition, the greater the coverage the more likely students will feel under constant pressure to 'cram' the course content into their heads just to get through the assignments and examinations. Their main concern would be to stuff their heads with collections of vaguely related facts and to satisfy performance criteria on a laundry list of techniques or competencies.

In the process of coping with these pressures, students may develop a distaste for learning. Certainly the disposition to be reflective is unlikely to thrive when

coverage is the choice. Under these circumstances, students are unlikely to feel encouraged to examine deeply what is presented. Recent research on the effects of excessive performance pressures on transfer and retention of learning suggests that the coverage approach may be disfunctional, especially in the long run (Dweck, 1986). The cumulative effect of such experiences may be to undermine or inhibit the disposition to delve into problems and to take responsibility for one's own learning (Katz and Raths, 1985).

The fact that topics and skills are covered in a course and sufficient mastery to pass exams is achieved, does not mean that the mastery is firm enough to withstand the pressures of later real world demands. It seems reasonable to assume that courses opting for wide coverage would have low impact on students and produce high student dissatisfaction.

ADVANTAGES OF A MASTERY EMPHASIS A major advantage in emphasising mastery by reducing the scope of content and skills covered, is that it allows time to focus on the development of dispositions relevant to the students' long term professional development (Katz and Raths, 1985). In order to strengthen desirable and weaken undesirable dispositions, the relationships between lecturers and students have to be close, direct and fairly personal - all of which depends upon allocating substantial amounts of time to staff-student contact.

For example, the dispositions to be accepting, nurturant, thoughtful, resourceful, to be experimental, to consider and try alternative approaches to teaching, to be open to fresh ideas, to look things up, to cooperate with colleagues and so forth, can be addressed more easily when the teacher education course is less oriented to coverage and the unavoidable pressures it creates and when it allows time for in-depth examination of a smaller range of topics and techniques. Time can be given to consideration of a wider range of contextual, situational and ethical constraints facing teachers, the pro's and con's of various practices and other complexities of professional practice.

DISADVANTAGES OF A MASTERY EMPHASIS Clearly the range of content and skills to be covered in a teacher education course can always be expanded. It is difficult to argue with the assertion that students should master all the knowledge they will be expected to teach. However, in the case of the early childhood teacher, being responsive to children's interests means that the student would require many specialisations and a very long course in the liberal and all the fine arts, the life and natural sciences, human development, linguistics, carpentry, physical education and so forth.

The demands that students should develop understanding, sensitivity, knowledge and skills to be competent with culturally diverse groups with disabled children and with irate, stressed or fearful parents, all have merit. However, if mastery is to be emphasised, some topics will have to be dropped from the lengthening list.

SUMMARY Given the short life of knowledge and skills learned under pressure, it would seem to be the 'least worst' error to opt for deep mastery of a small range of content and skills judged essential to practitioners in early childhood education. It may be that the specific content of a course contributes less to its impact on ultimate professional practice than other parameters, such as, the ethos of the program or institution, the philosophy or ideology it espouses and so forth. Furthermore, students often complain of repetition in their course; it may be that while course catalogue descriptions of classes imply diverse and wide coverage of topics, the actual content of the classes may overlap considerably. While overlap and repetition should aid mastery (as long as boredom is avoided), experience suggests that for many students, repetition is a source of dissatisfaction.

It seems reasonable also to assume that a mastery emphasis would give students greater feelings of competence and confidence (in what they have learned) than the coverage emphasis and therefore a greater sense of satisfaction with their professional preparation. It is likely that with a mastery emphasis, courses would have a longer lasting impact on graduates. However, if the master 'horn' of the dilemma is chosen, the field of early childhood education would have to establish some priorities concerning which content and skills deserve the greatest priority in a teacher education course.

DILEMMA NO 2: THEMATIC VERSUS ECLECTIC COURSE FOCUS

Most teacher education programs in the US consist of specified courses (classes in particular subjects, each earning credit hours) and categories of course requirements which, when summed, qualify the student for a teaching certificate or licence. Typically each class in the course is offered by an individual faculty specialist who elects what to teach and the orientations, philosophies or themes to emphasise. In the US, teacher education students are typically exposed to an eclectic array of approaches to teaching and learning.

A few small teacher education institutions specialise in particular philosophies or orientations to education (such as Bank Street College of Education or Montessori training colleges) and organise classes around a single coherent view or philosophy of education. Every class comprising the course is committed to adopt common themes as a basis for selecting the content of classes, the skills to be mastered and by which to evaluate students.

ADVANTAGES OF A THEMATIC APPROACH It seems reasonable to assume that when students receive similar, or at least concordant messages from

all instructors, the program will have a deeper and more enduring impact on their subsequent professional practices. Students in thematically oriented courses can feel that they are being given clear messages about what is good/bad, or right/wrong and about how to proceed in teaching. It seems reasonable to assume that a program organised around a single and coherent theme or a unified approach is likely to be more satisfying to students.

DISADVANTAGES OF A THEMATIC APPROACH A teacher education program organised around a particular doctrine or philosophy can equip graduates to function in a setting committed to that same approach. However, they would be ill-suited to be employed in settings that have adopted other philosophies or approaches to early education. Indeed, when employment opportunities are limited, the course organised around a single approach or method may jeopardise graduates' chances of finding congenial employment opportunities.

Furthermore, if a teacher education program is to be organised around a single coherent theme, it would have to be offered by a department in which a team of colleagues agrees on appropriate practices and in a sense, indoctrinates students into that view. There are many examples of such an approach that seem to have a lasting impact on graduates (Montessori or Bank Street training for example). However, in a tertiary institutional setting (in the US) which typically rewards individual scholarship in which competition among faculty members for star status is reinforced, team work among them is usually resisted and therefore 'speaking with one voice' is highly unlikely.

In addition, such a doctrinaire approach is antithetical to the ethos of a university (less so to a college) which prizes openness to alternative points of view. Indeed, one of the virtues of locating teacher education inside polytechnic and multi-purpose tertiary education institutions is that students can be enriched by exposure to a range of subjects, competing ideas and to peers and faculty in other specializations.

If a single philosophy or approach to teaching is adopted by a teaching department, by whom and by what means should the theme be selected? How is the selection of a given theme legitimated? Such questions cannot be answered empirically; they are matters of policy and politics.

ADVANTAGES OF AN ECLECTIC APPROACH Exposing students in an early childhood teacher education course to a range of competing ideas and methods contributes to their familiarity with the history and classical problems in the field and to their recognition that alternative views of appropriate practices exist. The latter is consistent with a view of teacher education as professional socialisation rather than mere technical training. The eclectic approach also affords students the opportunity to seek out a philosophy of teaching most congenial to their own particular proclivities and dispositions.

In as much as conclusive or compelling direct evidence in support of one approach versus others is as yet unavailable, presenting an eclectic array of alternatives seems advisable. Graduates of eclectic courses are more likely than those of thematic courses to be versatile in what they offer future employers.

DISADVANTAGES OF AN ECLECTIC APPROACH Given that students are likely to be at a stage in their development when they crave unambiguous guidelines and 'tips for teaching', exposure to competing philosophies and approaches could create confusion and anxiety and hence, dissatisfaction. Many undergraduates coerce instructors into providing prescriptions or recipes for action; thus they are unlikely to welcome the study of an array of alternative approaches. Some may perceive the eclectic approach as the faculty's abdication of its own professional judgment. My own experience is that, under such conditions, students dismiss the college staff as unable to 'get its act together' and then develop a united front with their cooperating teachers in the schools against the college staff (Zeichner and Liston, 1987). In such cases, it is expected that students would express high dissatisfaction with their teacher preparation. An eclectic approach is also not likely to have an enduring impact on their subsequent professional performance.

The eclectic approach may also impinge upon relations between colleagues. It would be difficult to champion a particular philosophy of teaching without casting aspersions upon the judgment of colleagues who espouse other views; the situation would present difficult ethical as well as pedagogical conflicts. How is it possible, for example, to assert that approach A is developmentally appropriate for young children without suggesting that approach B is inappropriate? How can colleagues who champion competing views of good practice work together productively on other matters of mutual concern?

SUMMARY On balance, it would seem that a thematic approach, that is, adopting a particular coherent philosophy for a whole course, would offer greater satisfaction to students and have a more lasting impact on their professional development than an eclectic one. This dilemma is more problematic in the US than in Australia. However, it may develop as a consequence of the institutional amalgamations currently in progress in Australia.

DILEMMA NO 3: CURRENT VERSUS FUTURE NEEDS OF STUDENTS

During the preservice period, students are typically at a stage of development of high dependence on lecturers for direction, prescription and evaluation. Lecturers

can indulge and gratify this dependence or they can encourage students to begin to take responsibility for their own learning and future professional development by withholding specific academic instructions, directions and prescriptions.

ADVANTAGES OF ADDRESSING STUDENTS' CURRENT NEEDS Preservice students come to the teacher education program after many years of success as students - in the narrow academic sense of that term. Their previous socialisation has adapted them well to meeting clear expectations and specific course requirements (such as, the exact length of term papers, points awarded per assignment and per exam question) and be following explicit criteria in order to obtain high marks. If tutors yield to pressures to continue and reinforce habits of attending to academic procedures rather than to intellectual content, students will feel comfortable in the system and be reasonably satisfied with their experience of teacher education. The impact of the course may be adequate in the short term, but is unlikely to be enduring.

DISADVANTAGES OF INDULGING STUDENTS' CURRENT NEEDS One of the issues is that it is not clear to what extent being good at being a student - in the strict academic versus intellectual sense - contributes to, or is compatible with becoming good at teaching. Dispositions that might serve students' long term professional development (especially the disposition to go on learning), cannot be manifested and thus strengthened if students' current needs for directions and prescriptions are gratified. In other words, indulging students' demands for specifics about grades and exams may undermine intellectual and professional development in the long term.

ADVANTAGES OF ADDRESSING LONG TERM NEEDS If, on the other hand, instructors resist such student pressures for an academic rather than intellectual ethos and offer instead flexibility, open-ended tasks, loosely structured assignments and encourage initiative and independent study, elective projects and so forth, students are likely to suffer anxiety and become dissatisfied with the program. They may feel vulnerable to the particular whims of the tutor which, in turn, might engender feelings of insecurity that will weaken the impact of the course.

This dilemma can be examined in terms of the **feedforward problem** generic to all anticipatory socialisation, namely, that preservice teacher education consists largely of providing answers to questions not yet asked and of preparing for eventualities rather than actualities. The general principle underlying the **feedforward effect** is that while experience, once obtained, does not change, the evaluation of it may change as time passes and subsequent experiences and understandings accrue.

An example of professional socialisation and the **feedforward effect** in another field comes from findings reported by Neel (1978) of a study of 200 executives

who were asked about what changes they would like if they were to go back to undergraduate school in business and what classes would have enhanced their careers. Neel (1978:7) reported that:

> Three distinct categories emerged...(1) individuals out of an undergraduate program for only three years indicated they would include more technical or "how-to" courses...(2)...executives with seven to ten years' work experience indicated their careers would have been significantly enhanced if they had had additional courses in human relations, psychology or sociology to equip them for more effective dealings with people within the organization; and (3) individuals with twelve to fifteen years of work experience indicated that they would have liked additional courses in philosophy, religious studies and literature.

These data partially support the hypothesised **feedforward effect** and suggest that the shifts in graduates' evaluations of their teacher education may be systematically related to developmental factors associated with the progress of their careers. It is interesting to note that the respondents in Neel's second or third group might have resisted sociology or philosophy classes during training, probably as being too impractical.

In conceptualising the **feedforward** principle, Katz and Raths (1985) propose that teacher education can be thought of in terms of three time periods as follows:

> Period I: Anticipatory - before enrollment in a training program.
> Period II: Participatory - during training.
> Period III: Retrospective - following training, during teaching career.

During Period I - **anticipatory** - the future student has some vague expectations of the training about to be experienced. Of particular interest are students' views concerning how practical and how interesting the course will be and what features of it will be of most help in learning to teach.

During Period II - **participatory** - in active participation in the course, the student also evaluates the interest, practicality or usefulness of the course. In Period III - retrospective - spanning an entire teaching career, the graduate similarly evaluates the experiences obtained earlier.

Katz and Raths (1985) hypothesised that the evaluations with respect to the applicability, practicality and interest of the course change during the early years of the career such that what may have been evaluated positively as interesting or applicable during Period II, may retrospectively in Period III, be judged low on either or both of these criteria. Similarly, what a student evaluates negatively during Period II may retrospectively be reassessed positively. Thus a teacher in the third year of employment might think: "I was bored by the work required of me while a student in class X, but now, as I look back, I'm glad I had to do it" or vice versa. Or a student might think: "When I was a student I never expected to use what

I learned in class A, but in fact I have applied it often", or "The work I had to do in class Y was interesting and fun, but looking back, I realize it was a waste of time".

It is likely that practice teaching receives more positive evaluations during both Period II and early during Period III than other elements of a teacher education course. Teachers often claim the practicum was the only part of their preparation of lasting value. The relationship between these claims and the supervisor's role in the teaching practice experience is not known. However, if the hypothesised **feedforward effect** is real, it may be that some lecturers and supervisors who make students feel uncomfortable during practice are evaluated positively later **in retrospect** and vice versa, that those who help students feel comfortable are negatively evaluated but only in retrospect.

DISADVANTAGES OF ADDRESSING LONG TERM NEEDS The main disadvantage to indulging students' current needs for unambiguous answers to their questions may be that though they feel satisfied at the time, their evaluations become more negative later when they examine their preservice preparation retrospectively. Similarly, preservice experiences evaluated negatively at the time may, in retrospect, be re-evaluated positively. In other words, the experiences students have in their preservice course do not change, but the meaning, value and benefits attributed to them may change with increasing professional service.

SUMMARY The major implication of the hypothesised **feedforward effect** is that decisions concerning what is in students' best interests cannot be based entirely upon their evaluations of their experiences while they are undergoing them. The difficult question is: On what basis should those decisions be made? The **feedforward effect** provokes questions like: What aspects of teaching can and cannot be learned in advance? What aspects of teaching can best - or indeed - can only be learned **in situ?** Such questions are difficult to answer both empirically and logically. I suggest that many major aspects of teaching cannot be learned in advance and that we may have to settle for helping students simply to learn **about** them. Empirical validation of the **feedforward** effect awaits longitudinal studies.

DILEMMA NO 4: AFFECTIVE VERSUS EVALUATION EMPHASIS

Part of a teacher's role at every level is to address learners' needs for support and encouragement. Some teacher education programs emphasise the supportive and pastoral functions of the staff more than others. It is also part of every teacher's role to evaluate learners' progress so as to exclude weak or inept recruits from entering the profession.

ADVANTAGES OF THE AFFECTIVE EMPHASIS Most students in teacher education need some emotional support and encouragement to help them through the rough spots. Teacher educators, especially in their roles as supervisors of teaching practice, are sometimes subjected to strong pressure from students for nurturance and support. Students frequently seek encouragement to 'keep them going', and to 'try again', to continue in spite of fumbling first efforts. The major advantages to emphasising the helping and nurturing aspects of supervision is that students are likely to feel satisfied with their training experiences (Combs, 1965).

DISADVANTAGES OF THE AFFECTIVE EMPHASIS The provision of strong support and encouragement may inhibit the development of students' independence and self-reliance. Furthermore, the tutor or lecturer often has to choose between continuing to offer support in the hope that a weak student will ultimately improve, or counseling the student out of the program. If the supervisor waits too long it may become too late to deny certification to a student who has already invested much in his/her education.

There is a sense in which strong emphasis on the affective aspects of relationships between tutors and students distinguishes the ethos of the early childhood education department from other departments in the institution. While some may see this as a desirable distinction, many will take the view that early childhood educators are fuzzy minded and soft headed. They may be seen as less exacting than colleagues in other branches of higher education, as squeamish about applying high standards and making tough decisions about student achievement.

ADVANTAGES OF THE EMPHASIS ON EVALUATION The teacher educator's gate-keeping role requires realistic evaluation of students' progress and for counseling poor students out of programs when necessary. Furthermore, when concern with standards and evaluation are optimally salient to students, a sense that the ethos of the teacher education program is a serious one is conveyed to students. I suggest that a teacher education course should impose an optimum level of suffering such that participants believe that they are being prepared for which learning the knowledge and skills requires real effort and even some (optimal) stress and also, that they are preparing for a profession into which not everyone is admitted.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE EMPHASIS ON EVALUATION Realistic evaluation requires an 'optimum distance' between the tutor and the students (Katz, 1984). Students may interpret the distance as a lack of caring and be discouraged by it. One kind of student response may be to form close emotional bonds with their cooperating teachers and together they may form an alliance against the college staff.

SUMMARY When teacher educators emphasise their supportive functions, they may admit into teaching some students who might become poor teachers. If

on the other hand, they choose to emphasise their evaluative functions, some students who may have become good teachers might be excluded. After all, some students will improve with the nurturance and support of a supervisor, but some will not. Which error is preferrable? How can both responsibilities be optimised? Critical feedback can be more helpful and less debilitating when it is offered in the context of a genuine and trusting relationship. The development of such relationships is highly labor-intensive. They require constant informal contact between staff and students and it would be necessary for the teacher educator to be easily and readily available to students for frequent consultation, not just at times of crisis, but on a regular basis. This ready availability is difficult if staff are also expected to be productive scholars and researchers.

DILEMMA NO 5: CURRENT VERSUS INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

A teacher education course may emphasise helping students to learn to teach with the most recently developed innovative practices or it may give priority to helping students to acquire competence in the current standard practices in early childhood services. Given a finite amount of time in a course, not all possible pedagogical methods can be learned.

ADVANTAGES OF EMPHASISING INNOVATIVE PRACTICES A major **raison d'etre** of a professional school (for any profession) is to develop new knowledge and practices by which the profession's standard of practice is raised and welfare of its clients improved. It is assumed that when new recruits are equipped with the new knowledge and practices offered in the course, subsequent professional practice will be upgraded. Emphasis on disseminating new ideas and practices via new entrants into the profession is a central mission of a university's professional school. However, teacher education departments outside universities (in teachers' colleges) may not be under as much pressure to emphasise the development of new knowledge and innovative new practices as those in universities.

DISADVANTAGES OF EMPHASISING INNOVATIVE PRACTICES Emphasis on helping students learn the latest innovative teaching methods frequently makes teaching practice problematic. Although there are no studies on the extent of discrepancy between the practices urged upon students by tutors and those on view in the practicum, my experience suggests that current practitioners in the schools often dismiss students' efforts to implement new practices by reminding them that they are now in 'the real world'. Students may feel caught between their supervisors and lecturers and the cooperating teacher; they identify with the latter and form a united front against the tutors.

Sometimes novice teachers are accused of 'showing off' or otherwise rocking the boat by their veteran colleagues when they try innovative practices. However, I have also heard of placing brand new teachers in classrooms with the most difficult children, on the grounds that they are fresh from being trained in 'the latest techniques'. Teacher educators may be intent on helping new teachers master innovative practices, but will become discouraged when they rarely see those practices implemented because of institutional resistance to change and experimentation.

The innovative emphasis is likely to cause dissatisfaction among students, at least in the short term. They may feel handicapped by having been prepared to teach in ways rarely seen in practice. How teachers evaluate their training in newer methods retrospectively is not known.

Similarly for supervisors who work in communities with limited availability of 'good' teaching practice sites, maintaining mutually respectful relations with school or centre personnel is often difficult. Under such conditions the tutor faces ethical conflicts with respect to both the student and the school teachers involved.

Part of the dilemma is that when tutors urge students to employ practices other than the current ones, they may undermine students' respect for and confidence in their cooperating teachers. Though this predicament may not directly affect student satisfaction or program impact, it is a major issue confronting teacher educators.

ADVANTAGES OF EMPHASISING CURRENT PRACTICES A good grounding in current teaching practices prepares graduates to take up their positions with minimal adjustment problems. Experienced colleagues can appreciate that the newcomers are in the early stages of learning the teaching methods they are very familiar with.

Having been trained in current standard practices, new teachers are likely to experience a measure of continuity between their teaching practice experiences and their first teaching assignment. Thus a program emphasis on helping students acquire competence in current practices is likely to be most satisfying to students, especially in the short term. The long term satisfaction derived from this approach is difficult to predict.

If induction of students into current standard practices is emphasised, the research and development mission of universities would be difficult to rationalise. A brief internship or a training program characteristic of a normal school would suffice to prepare new teachers. As Patterson (in press) points out, the normal school* was devoted to learning the behaviours and attitudes designed to facilitate accommodation to the established system in the schools by imitating practicing teachers.

* The original teacher training institutions in North America were called 'normal schools'.

DISADVANTAGES OF EMPHASISING CURRENT PRACTICES Emphasis on current practices, essentially learned during teaching practice, suggests that the impact of the college as a specialised training institution is low, in both the short and long term. It has merely served to facilitate the impact of the school itself and its current practices.

SUMMARY To minimise the conflicting pressures resulting from this dilemma, tutors might suggest to students that they strive first to master current practices. Tutors might then introduce them to newer alternative practices and suggest that once they feel competent and confident in their posts, they can experiment with preferred alternative practices. This strategy is based on a developmental approach to students' current and future needs.

DILEMMA NO 6: SPECIFIC VERSUS GLOBAL ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

A program might define its objectives in crisp, concrete and specific ways, making clear to all of its students precisely what is expected of them. Alternatively, a program's objectives might make use of broadly or vaguely defined constructs such as "The curriculum provides candidates with integrated and interdisciplinary knowledge and understanding of child development..." (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1982:3).

The latter omits detailed information about how the objective is to be assessed. Choices made by lecturers and tutors on this issue are bound to affect the level of satisfaction experienced by students and probably the impact of the program as well.

ADVANTAGES OF SPECIFIC ASSESSMENT CRITERIA The criteria by which learners' progress is assessed can vary in specificity. High specificity of the criteria for assessment has several advantages. First, the more specific they are, the more easily they can be made explicit. Thus students easily come to know what is required for success and what is expected of them. Second, it is fairly well established that the more specific the assessment criteria, the more assiduously students work at attaining success on them (Natriello and Dornbusch, 1984). Third, most teacher education students are admitted into higher education because of successful socialisation into the disposition to work for grades and to pass examinations. They are therefore likely to feel comfortable when the grading criteria are clear. Fourth, specificity and explicitness concerning how students' progress and performance are to be judged is consistent with a sense of fairness. Explicit and specific assessment procedures constitute a kind of contract between a student and instructor implying a mutual agreement that "if you do your part, I'll

do mine". Such criteria usually consist of points awarded for specific assignments that are accumulated to yield a final grade. Summing points and scores appears to be objective and to involve little subjective judgment on the part of the lecturer. Overall, at least in the short term, students are likely to feel comfortable and satisfied when the course adopts specific and explicit assessment procedures.

DISADVANTAGES OF SPECIFIC ASSESSMENT CRITERIA The more explicit and specific the assessment criteria, the more trivial is the conception of teaching presented to students. Second, the ethos created by emphasis on specific criteria is apt to be more technical than intellectual and is therefore unlikely to cultivate such intellectual dispositions as reflectivity, openness to new ideas and alternative interpretations of teaching predicaments, or the disposition to take responsibility for one's own learning. All of these dispositions could have an impact on professional practice in the long term.

ADVANTAGES OF A GLOBAL ASSESSMENT APPROACH The advantage of a global approach to assessment of students' progress is that it takes into account the complex nature of teaching and a broad conception of teaching can be addressed. Holistic criteria might, for example, include professional dispositions (Katz and Raths, 1985) that are difficult to specify in detail and depend upon observation of students over a period of time. Holistic judgments enable instructors to put the students' behaviour into a context of multiple occasions and situations in which they have been observed, with a sense of how the student might function in the complex professional environment of a school/centre can be incorporated into the evaluation procedures.

DISADVANTAGES OF A GLOBAL ASSESSMENT APPROACH As suggested in the discussion on the advantages of specific assessment criteria, under the global approach students are likely to be dissatisfied in that they may feel assessments are arbitrary and unfair; they may become anxious about the outcome of their efforts. When tutors answer vaguely such typical questions from students as "Do we have to know this?", "Will it be on the test?", students are apt to be resentful and may wonder if the tutor knows what he or she is doing.

SUMMARY Assessment of students' progress is one of the most stubborn predicaments facing teacher educators. Certainly some parts of a course are more appropriately assessed specifically and some holistically. Nevertheless, student and teacher appraisal strategies characterised by detailed lists of decontextualised behaviours may reveal whether the behaviours have been learned, but cannot guarantee that the dispositions to use the behaviours consistently, appropriately or with sufficient confidence have been acquired. A more global approach would take into account the necessity of establishing dispositional learning. Careful attention to the development of professionally relevant dispositions is likely to have a long term impact on students' development as teachers.

Accommodation to the conflicting pressures involved in this dilemma might be addressed by doing a bit of both. Specific assessment criteria can be applied in the formal instructional context of formal professional studies. But holistic criteria can be applied in the informal context of tutors' discussions and evaluations and writing recommendations for individual students. When the 'objective' criteria in the form of grades and test scores are at variance with the holistic judgments included in references and recommendations, tutors' credibility is undermined. Tutors are more likely to withhold non-objective assessments from written reports and more likely to employ them verbally, attenuating the credibility problem.

CONCLUSION

One of the major concerns of teacher educators, as well as other groups who have a stake in teacher education, is that they seem to have insufficient impact on students. Indeed, teachers themselves often claim that their own teacher education was not effective. Among the most severe critics of teacher education are its own graduates. Certainly there is some variation: some teacher education courses are more effective than others and some are evaluated more positively by their graduates than others. The dilemmas described in this paper seem to be generic to all teacher education, though some are more acute in some countries than others. If the formulation of these six dilemmas is correct, then we are faced with a series of choices of errors: there are no error-free alternatives. The next step seems to be to determine which are the 'least worst' errors in considering the long term development of the profession of teaching young children.

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